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OLD!

RETRO* GAMER



No.1 for classic gaming

VOLUME TWO ISSUE FOUR

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>MISSING COVERDISC?

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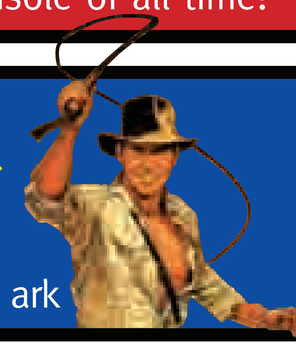


RETRO* GAMER



Nintendo Famicom

Is this the best console of all time?



Indiana Jones

Opening the gaming ark



Rare's GoldenEye

007 heaven on the N64



Pong Wars

A brief history of videogames

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Retro Gamer 16
£5.99 UK
$14.95 AUS
$27.70 NZ

9 771742 315004 16>

RETRO GAMER*

V2 04

eMag

credits

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<SMALL PRINT>

Distributed by
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Fax: 01895 433602

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ISSN: 1742-3155

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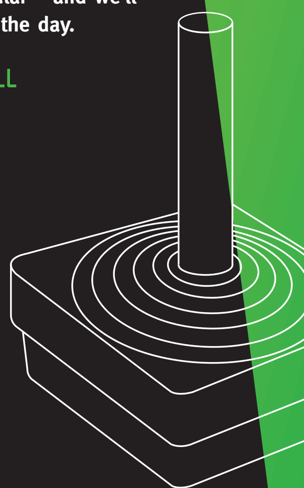


Prepare for invasion, as retro fans, exhibitors and celebrities descend on London for the second Classic Gaming Expo. Following a brief, nightmarish period when it looked like the event may succumb to circumstances beyond organiser Chris Millard's control, the good news is that CGE 2005 will take place on August 13th at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon. Chris should be commended (knighted?) for his efforts in getting the show on the road. The failure of Game Zone Live goes to show that even a large consumer event with huge financial backing can still fall spectacularly on its arse, so Chris's dedication to the retro cause cannot be underestimated.

I'm also pleased to announce that *Retro Gamer* will once again sponsor the show, providing Chris and his team with our full support leading up to the event. CGE 2005 is on course to surpass last year's successful debut in every way, and it's hoped that one day the show will be as big as its US counterpart (which is now in its eighth year). And that's something we're very proud to be part of.

Book your tickets early – it's bound to be popular – and we'll see you there on the day.

MARTYN CARROLL
EDITOR

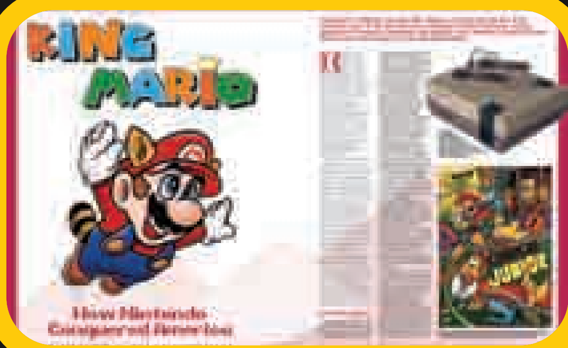


Subscription prices

UK: £71.88 (12 issues)
Europe: £77.00 (12 issues)
Rest or world: £83.00 (12 issues)

Retro Gamer, ISSN number 1742 3155, is published monthly (twelve times per year) by Live Publishing at 1320 Route 9, Champlain, N.Y. 12919 for US$123 per year. Periodicals postage paid at Champlain, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Retro Gamer c/o Express Mag, P.O. Box 2769, Plattsburgh, NY 12901-1329.

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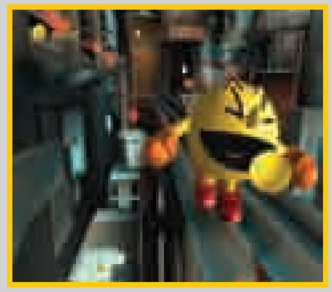
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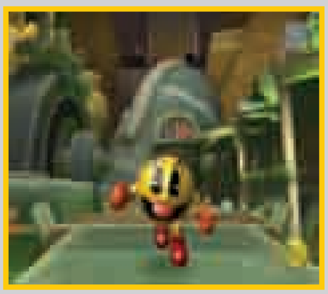
Return of the Pac

25 years and still eating...

Pac-Man, eh? Who'd have thought that a simple yellow circle could have had such an impact? Besides becoming one of the most recognisable videogame characters ever created, Pac-Man was one of the key players in bringing gaming to the mainstream audience. And now, a quarter of a century since he first hit arcades, the ever-hungry hero is set to return once more.



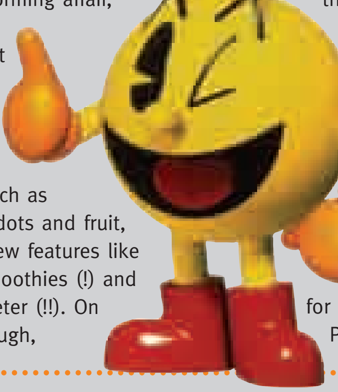




Pac-Man's leash holder, Namco, recently announced that the latest adventure in the popular Pac-Man World series will be due out towards the end of the year, just in time to celebrate his 25th birthday.

The new game will see Pac-Man on a quest to save the world from Erwin, your everyday evil genius. In a bid for power, the screwy scientist has created a device that can open a doorway to the spectral realm. But this device has malfunctioned, causing the ghostly dimension to collapse and seep into the real world. If things aren't fixed soon, then the two worlds will combine, and darkness will reign forever. "Mu-ha-ha-ha," as evil genius's are fond of saying.

Pac-Man World 3 will be a full 3D platforming affair, as you'd expect. But it will still feature all of the usual Pac-Man elements, such as power-pills, dots and fruit, as well as new features like power-up smoothies (!) and the Pactrometer (!!). On the way, though, players will run into several blasts from the past, and will even meet some old enemies. We would also strongly suspect that some classic Pac-Man games will make their way into the final game in some form or another, probably as unlockable bonuses.



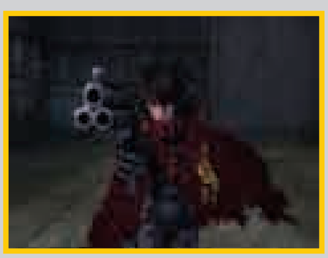
Pac-Man World 3 will be out in the autumn for PC, Xbox, GameCube, PS2 and PSP.

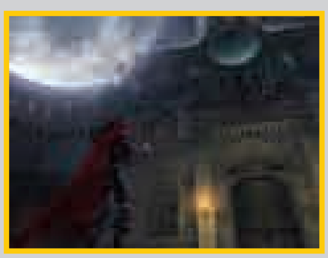
Devil May Fantasise

Final Fantasy VII stands by for action

The hugely popular and long-running Japanese RPG monster that is Final Fantasy looks set to dip its turn-based toe into arcade action once again (remember Ergheiz?). Final Fantasy VII: Dirge of Cerberus is the new title being thrown around, and although there are as yet no clear details regarding the actual game, from what we've seen, it looks set to replicate the action seen in Capcom's Devil May Cry.

Taking place three years after the events seen in Final Fantasy VII, the game will revolve around returning FFVII star, Vincent Valentine. Details are sketchy at the moment, but it looks as though Shinra Inc's military special forces, SOLDIER are up to no good, and a great meteor has hit a small peaceful village, causing the heroic vampire to get involved.





Early screens already suggest that the game is very likely to be a third-person scrapper of some sort, and should see the return of many of FFVII's characters and locations. With this action-heavy gameplay, it's not certain how much, if any, RPG gameplay will remain. But maybe it's time for the series to try a change in pace...

Also making a return to the gaming world is Cloud, the main character from FFVII. However, his appearance isn't in an RPG or an action adventure – he's not even on a console. In fact, you can now find the spiky-haired hero hitting the slopes on the new mobile phone game Final Fantasy VII Snowboarding. Yes, that cool little sub-game from FFVII is back and is doing the rounds on mobile. If you want to find out more FF information, visit **www.square-enix.com**.

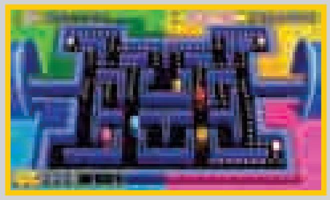


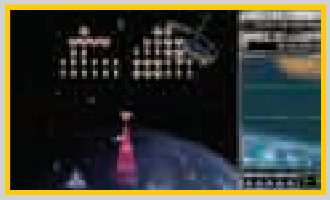
All the latest news from the retro world

Namco a go-go

Arcade classics on the move

Got an import PSP? Hungry for some mobile retro gaming? Then the guys at Namco have got the answer. The games giant has recently announced that it intends to release a retro-fuelled collection of its all time greats onto Sony's handheld. The release, titled Namco Museum Battle Collection, originally went on sale earlier in the year in Japan and featured Namco hits Pac-Man, Dig Dug, Galaga and more. However, Western gamers will get an even bigger dose of arcade history as the US version (and presumably the UK one too) will not only feature all of the original Japanese titles, but will also contain an extra 10 classics. These will include Xevious, Mappy, Dig Dug 2, Bosconian and more. And, as with the original Japanese release, each game will come in its original form, as well as an updated and reworked edition.







The compilation will also make full use of the PSP's wireless connectivity too, allowing multiple players to connect for some classic multiplayer action. You'll even be able to share the fun by using the Game Sharing Mode, which will let you transfer titles wirelessly to another PSP.

No release date has been confirmed at the time of writing but rest assured, we'll have a full review when it arrives.

Retro pirates raided!

1,000s of hooky NES systems seized



Authorities recently raided a number of locations in the US, and rather than finding the expected PC, PS2 and Xbox games, they uncovered a whopping 60,000 bootleg NES systems! The raids, which took place in New York and New Jersey, un-earthed many pirated NES games too, including Duck Hunt, Donkey Kong and the original Mario Bros.

Four people were arrested following the operation, in which FBI agents went undercover as potential buyers, informing the suspects that they wished to distribute the goods throughout NY and the Midwest. It's alleged that the defendants actually imported more than 280,000 illegal game consoles into the US in 2004 and that the piracy scam cost Nintendo millions in lost revenue.

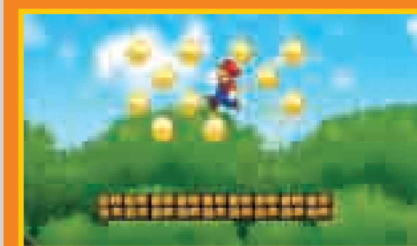
So there you go. As well as bringing America's most wanted to justice, and looking for extra-terrestrial life forms, the FBI is now onto retro game pirates too.

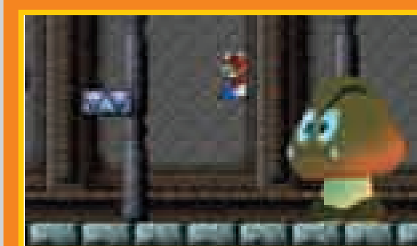
Brand new Mario

Nintendo's figurehead in new 2D platformer

If you prefer the good old days of Mario's exploits before his leap into 3D, then you'll be happy to know that Nintendo is developing a new DS title starring the lovable plumber.

Tentatively titled New Super Mario, the DS incarnation will ditch the 3D perspective, making it the first new 2D Mario game since Yoshi's Island on the Super Nintendo. Sadly, nothing of significance is known about the game at the moment. Until that changes, why not gaze at these mouth-watering screenshots.





Ones to watch

Two new retro games on the radar

A couple of interesting titles have appeared on the Web over the last few weeks, and while there are no real details to report or screens to show, the names alone are enough to get us excited. The two are Taito Legends and Bubble Bobble DS.

We can only imagine that Taito Legends will be a collection of the arcade games created by the legendary developer, and we hope that greats such as Phoenix, Qix, Arkanoid, Slap Fight and Renegade are included. Bubble Bobble DS on the other hand is a little more predictable, and we should have a faithful recreation of the hugely popular hit for the new mobile platform. More news as we get it.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

***Retro Gamer* ushers you back to May 1985, when big-memory computers and KP Skips were flavour of the month. And the main points of the news were…**

May 1985 was the month we finally found out about the long-awaited pricing structure of Atari's new 512KB ST range. Atari planned to bundle the 520ST with a monochrome monitor and a disk drive for £899. It hoped the package would hit the shelves around September time.

Two further setup variations would also be available. Package two would comprise of a 520ST minus the monitor but with a built-in RF modulator that would set you back a slightly lower £699, whilst a third option of the computer complete with a colour monitor, albeit of a lower resolution than the monochrome model, would also be available for £899.

Despite the news, Atari wasn't about to ditch its 8-bit range just yet. In direct competition with the swathe of new 128KB systems (specifically the recently announced Commodore 128), the 130XE arrived in shops with a £169.99 price tag.

So with Atari, Amstrad, Sinclair and Commodore all bringing out new machines, another challenger felt it was time to enter the fray. Enterprise Computers, the company formerly known as Samurai, which later changed to Elan and then once more to the comedic sponge-based offering of Flan, released its new 128KB version of the original Enterprise computer, giving it a steep £250 price tag. The older 64KB version was reduced to £180. Although a rather good machine, the Enterprise was introduced to the computer marketplace a bit too late in the day to make an impact and neither system ever gained a foothold on the computing ladder. Interesting Enterprise Fact #71: the machine's sound chip is called Dave.



Atari announced its new 16-bit computer, the ST, while the Enterprise 128KB computer joined the 8-bit party

Games watch

Beyond, responsible for such crackers as Lords Of Midnight and Doomdark's Revenge, announced plans for a new arcade arm. The label, to be called Monolith, revealed that its first release would be Rockford's Riot, the follow-up to the hugely successful Boulderdash.

After the rousing reception Starion received from the reviewers this month, Melbourne House revealed details of its next big game. Marketed as a martial-arts simulation rather than a beat-em-up, the forthcoming Way Of The Exploding Fist would be available next month for C64, Spectrum and Amstrad. Just stick with the crouched leg sweep and you can't fail…

Still flushed with the success of Everyone's A Wally, Mikro-Gen unveiled its next release in the series, Herbert's Dummy Run. With a release date set for June, the wandering, dribbly offspring of

›Game & Watch?

Welcome to the future! Oh yes, it was here in 1985, with the release of a computerised wrist terminal by Seiko. The RC-1000 was a digital watch compatible with the Commodore 64. It had an absolutely enormous memory capacity of 2KB RAM which would enable you to keep important titbits of information like notes to yourself, telephone numbers and schedule alarms for those all-important business meetings. It connected to your C64 with a cable and came with software to set up your wrist terminal – all for just £120.

Failing that, you could buy Cascade's infamous Cassette 50 compilation for under a tenner and bag yourself a fantastic calculator digital watch which, let's face it, was the only reason for buying that cassette full of crap in the first place.



Wally and Wilma Week should prove to offer more of the same head-scratching puzzle antics seen in previous games.

The month of May seemed to be suffering from tie-in mania with several software houses announcing licensing agreements with film, TV and prawn cocktail flavoured snacks. Dk'Tronics revealed they were ready to bring *Minder* to the Spectrum, whilst US Gold aimed higher with a deal for exclusive rights to all Walt Disney's characters.

Beyond also cashed in on the tie-in trend with a Superman licence of its own for its new Monolith label. The TV series, *Robin Of Sherwood*, was another title to be acquired, this time by Adventure International, who would be turning it into a graphic adventure. No big surprise there then.

Meanwhile Mastertronic, cheapo games maestros, announced an unusual union between themselves and KP Skips. The character of Clumsy Colin, who appears on Skips packaging, would be the main character in a game called Action Biker to be released sometime in June on the C64 and Spectrum.

Zzaptastic

May 1985 was a historic month for followers of the Commodore 64. The long-awaited first issue of *Zzap!64*, sister magazine to Newsfield's *Crash*, was finally available in newsagents. With illustrious names such as Gary Penn, Julian Rignall and Bob Wade controlling games reviews and Chris Anderson at the helm, the first issue made an instant impact and was a roaring success straight from the off.

Editor Chris Anderson would, however, shortly be making his own impact on the publishing world. After a short spell as the *Zzap* editor he would leave to start a small publishing company of his own, Future Publications, with its first magazine being *Amstrad Action*. That's for another time though...

In its first issue the *Zzap* team reviewed Firebird's Elite, giving it a whopping 95% and also bestowing on it the honour of the first-ever Zzap Gold Medal Award. In a cracking month for US Gold, three of its releases attained glory in the form of a hot and throbbing Sizzler award. The triumphant trio were Bounty Bob Strikes Back with 89% and Spy Hunter and Super Huey both notching up a respectable 87%.

Just to prove that US Gold wasn't completely dominant, Beyond managed a Sizzler with Shadowfire scoring 91%. Strangely, both Lords Of Midnight, also by Beyond, and Tir Na Nog (Gargoyle Games) scored 91%, but couldn't attain Sizzledom. Jeff Minter's latest Llamasoft release, Mama Llama, received a fairly lukewarm response from the computing press, including *Zzap*, who he had just started writing a regular column for.

Computer and Video Games also had a splattering of top-scoring reviews including, rather belatedly, the Soft Aid compilation, which scored 10 out of 10 in every section. Realistic reviewing or were they just being very charitable...

Over in *Crash* land, the biggest release of the month was Starion from Melbourne House. With an impressive 94% it earned programmer David Webb and Starion a coveted Crash Smash. Other Spectrum games to hit the same lofty heights were Bruce Lee (US Gold), World Series Baseball (Imagine), Dragontorc (Hewson), Spy Hunter (US Gold) and Emerald Isle (Level 9).

Both BBC and Amstrad conversions of Knight Lore (Ultimate) were finally available to new audiences and received a warm welcome from both camps. The multi-format release of Confuzion (Incentive) hit the shops, while Grand National (Elite) for the Spectrum was also under starter's orders, but fell at the second-last and was declared lame after an initial good showing.

And that was May 1985.



The first issue of *Zzap* carried reviews of several classic C64 titles, including Elite, Bounty Bob Strikes Back and Spy Hunter

›Top Five Charts (May 1985)

Commodore 64

1 Everyone's A Wally (Mikro-Gen)
2 Grog's Revenge (US Gold)
3 Bounty Bob Strikes Back (US Gold)
4 Master Of The Lamps (Activision)
5 Airwolf (Elite)

Spectrum

1 Booty (Firebird)
2 Bruce Lee (US Gold)
3 Raid Over Moscow (US Gold)
4 Gyron (Firebird)
5 Confuzion (Incentive)

Amstrad

1 Daley Thompson's Decathlon (Ocean)
2 Sir Lancelot (Melbourne House)
3 Combat Lynx (Durell)
4 Sorcery (Virgin)
5 Dark Star (Design Design)

UK singles chart

1 19 (Paul Hardcastle)
2 Move Closer (Phyllis Nelson)
3 I Feel Love (Bronski Beat & Marc Almond)
4 Everybody Wants To Rule The World (Tears For Fears)
5 Feel So Real (Steve Arrington)

Game of the Month

With Shadowfire, Denton Designs rewrote the adventure game, and a new genre was born

Innovation is a word used an awful lot these days, with developers always keen to claim that their game boasts truly original and innovative ideas. This is very rarely the case, but occasionally a game comes along that genuinely offers the gaming world something new to chew on, something so different you just have to stand up and take notice. Shadowfire was one such game, and its arrival heralded a huge change in the adventure-gaming world. Okay, so we know that the C64 version of Elite also came out at the same time, but you really don't need telling how great that particular game is. Shadowfire, on the other hand, is a little gem you may have overlooked.

Taking control of the Enigma Force, you have to rescue the Kryxix ambassador from the evil General Zoff. Your targets are aboard the Zoff 5 spacestation and you have 100 minutes (counting down in real time) to complete your mission.

Taking the classic adventure by the horns, Denton decided to ditch all of the preconceptions that usually go with the genre. There's no text input, no long-winded descriptions of your location, and no battling with dodgy syntax. Why? Because Denton implemented a revolutionary icon control system. Using a series of icon-driven menu screens, you control each member one at a time, issuing commands using the various mini-menus. A small top-down view shows the character's location, and a status panel indicates the activities of all party members. Each character has specific skills, can use certain items that others cannot (Manto is the only one capable of using the transporters for example), and has unique strength, agility and stamina levels.

Shadowfire is a deep and complex game that is as rewarding as it is challenging. Getting to grips with the icon control system can take a little longer than it perhaps should, but we'd strongly recommend you persevere as this is a truly groundbreaking game. Special mention should also go to the great soundtrack by Fred Gray.

Developer	Denton Designs
Format	C64/Spectrum
Price	£9.95
Players	One
SCORE	8/10











›It's an enigma



Shadowfire didn't shift significant numbers of copies, but it did well enough to warrant a sequel the following year. Enigma Force once again places you in control of the fearless team from the first game, albeit slightly streamlined as not all the members are present second time around. The icon-driven control system is again called into play, but this time character movement isn't limited to a small top-down view. Instead, the unfolding action takes place in the top half of the screen and is viewed side-on. Enigma Force may be the sequel to Shadowfire, but technically and visually it is in a league of its own.



eMag

Retro Rated

Welcome to the *Retro Gamer* reviews section. Read on to discover the team's opinion on the latest commercial releases...

Gametech PocketFami



Got some old NES games tucked away in a cupboard? Dig them out and play them again with this little Japanese wonder

Developer: Gametech **Format:** n/a **Price:** £49.99 **Players:** One-Two

The Famicom/NES is one of the most successful consoles of all time, with sales of the unit topping 50 million. The system served as a platform for many gaming icons, including Megaman, Samus Arran, Link and of course, Mario and friends. It was also home to the biggest-selling game of all time – Super Mario Bros. 3, which sold in excess of 18 million units worldwide.

The system was eventually superseded in 1990 by the more powerful Super NES, but games were still developed for the older 8-bit system for another four years, such was its huge popularity in Japan and the US. And now, thanks to the miracles of miniaturised technology, you can play all those classic games again on the go, with the PocketFami – a handheld Nintendo Entertainment System.

Slot it in

No doubt the keener retro fans amongst you already recognise this intriguing device, as it has been around for a while in Japan. But now, thanks to Blaze, the unit is coming to Western shores.

The PocketFami is a small handheld unit, about the same size as the Sega GameGear. It has a 2.5in TFT screen, standard D-pad, A and B buttons, rapid-fire buttons and a headphone socket. When it comes to games, the PocketFami is a little different to the rest of the handheld pack as it takes the original big-as-a-house NES game paks, which are almost twice the size of the system itself. The smaller Japanese games fit snugly into the unit's cartridge slot, while Euro and US carts require the use of a special adaptor that comes bundled

›Beware the Big N

The PocketFami is far removed from the seedy and unscrupulous worlds of knock-off NES systems that claim to contain 100s of games, so there are no worries about the legality of the product. After all, it doesn't come with any games, and you need original cartridges to use it. It's also been out in Japan for a while already.

However, Nintendo has a very colourful past record with third-party releases that feed off its own properties (legal or not), and there have already been reports online that Nintendo is none too happy about the PocketFami. Quite how far Nintnedo will take its concerns isn't yet known, however. So, even if you don't intend to buy a PocketFami to play old NES games on, it may be worth investing in a unit for your retro collection. You never know, they may not be as readily available in the future...



with the device. In effect this means that you have a region-free games console. This is even more impressive when you take into account the fact that the PocketFami also features control ports for original NES controllers, and can be connected to a TV, turning it into a fully functional multi-region NES. Nice one.

Super size me

Although the PocketFami certainly sounds like a brilliant idea, it's flawed in a couple areas. The most glaringly obvious of which is the use of original cartridges. While this works well with the tiny Japanese carts, Western players are saddled with oversized games that are twice the size of their Eastern counterparts. So, after slotting in the adaptor and a game, you're left holding the gaming equivalent of a water dousing rod, with the cart sticking out like a mutant thumb – hardly a great design for those busy days on the bus. And, aside from looking slightly ridiculous, it also feels rather unsteady, with the cart wobbling all over the place.

The second problem is the screen. The low-cost 2.5in display just isn't good enough, especially when you consider the quality screens available in mobile devices these days, and it's a little too blurry to use for any prolonged period. It suffers from the same speed blurring effect that plagued the GameBoy's original monochrome screen. In colour the effect is more noticeable, and makes the unit hard on the eyes.

Thankfully though, the ability to use the PocketFami connected to a TV saves the unit from damnation, and in this mode it's a perfect NES, especially if you have your old controllers. But let's face it, you could look on eBay and grab an original NES with games for around the same price (maybe less), so buying this may not be the best option after all. A very good idea, but sadly let down by a poor build quality.

Rating:

›Size matters?

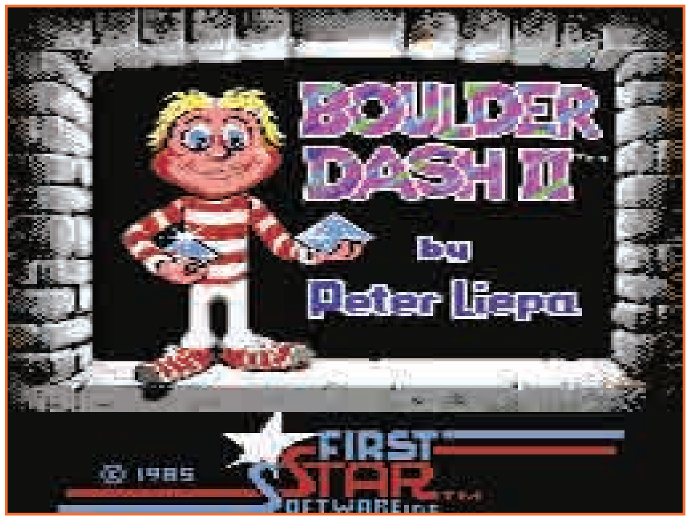
As we mentioned in the main review, one of the downsides of the PocketFami is the sheer size of the NES carts you slot in. But why are the NES and Famicom carts so different?

Well, the simple truth is that there is very little reason behind the difference aside from region limitation. The Euro and US carts were deliberately made different to the Japanese versions in order to cut down on illegal game imports. Japanese Famicom carts have 60 pins, while the Western NES carts have 72. Out of the box, a standard NES could only play games from its region, until various adaptors surfaced some years later (similar to the interface that comes with the PocketFami).

Quite why the Western carts had to be so huge (half of the cart has nothing in it – the actual game boards are the same) is a mystery, and the size is seemingly a straightforward design option. Maybe Nintendo execs thought that bigger was better and more likely to sell as people would feel they were getting more for their money. Whatever the reason, Gametech certainly didn't take the size of Western carts into account when designing the PocketFami, and it clearly shows.



First Star Software's Greatest Hits



The popular US developer dusts down 14 of its old titles and releases them in one value pack

Developer: First Star **Format:** PC **Price:** £9.99 **Players:** One-Two

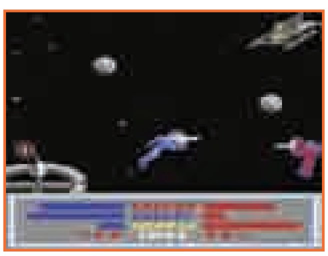


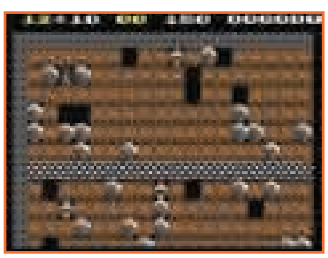
A collection with a title like this doesn't really need much explaining, does it? It's basically the best of First Star Software's back catalogue, served up on a shiny silver platter for your PC, right? Well, not exactly…

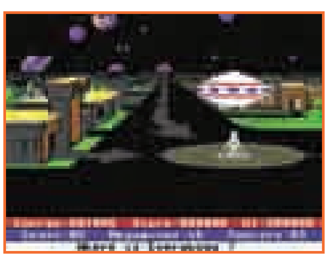
First Star has been developing software since 1982. Like a lot of 80s software houses, these days it's dabbling in the mobile phone market, and is best remembered for a couple of classic titles released during its formative years. They are, of course, Boulder Dash and Spy vs Spy. Yet while Rockford is well represented here – the original Boulder Dash game, its first sequel, and the later Constructive Kit are included – the black and white spies have slinked completely out of sight. OK, so it's not exactly a mystery why they're missing (the MAD licence is now owned by Take2 who recently released a new Spy vs Spy game for consoles), but that doesn't make it any more acceptable. After all, a First Star collection without Spy vs Spy is like a System 3 collection without The Last Ninja. Or like a Team 17 collection without Worms. Or a Sensible Software collection without Sensible Soccer. It's just too big a hole to simply ignore.

So what exactly do we get? Besides the Boulderdash games, there are a further 11 titles across a variety of formats. However, it's difficult to determine which format thanks to the simple front-end that gives very little a way. Ultimately you only know which format the game is for by selecting a title and then waiting to see which emulator launches. If VICE opens then you know it's a C64 title. If Steem opens then it's an ST game. The fact that you can actually see freeware emulators running certainly takes away the shine you'd expect from a commercial product. Surely it would have been better to display the front-end full-screen and have the emulators open invisibly in the background. At least then the process of selecting and playing a game would have been seamless.









C64-centric

So far, so bad. Another annoyance is that nine of the 14 games are for the Commodore 64. This is not necessarily a bad thing, it's just that First Star made its name as publishers of Atari 8-bit software, with many of its most popular titles debuting on the Atari 400/800. A collection of Atari originals would have been much more apt. There is one Atari 8-bit title however – a previously unreleased game called Rent Wars. At the very least, First Star should be congratulated for digging up this little gem.

The other bonus features are half-hearted at best. There are a number of scans, including game artwork and promotional items, some of which are interesting and no doubt rare. There's also a couple of grainy video clips that run for less than a minute each. Even more disappointing is a text file that proclaims to profile the history of First Star, but is in fact a re-jigged press release which bangs on about mobile phone ventures and publishing partners.

If you hadn't gathered, this release doesn't exactly have us jumping in the aisles. To be perfectly honest it's a lazy collection that you can live without, even at this low price. Spy vs Spy may be missing, but as it turns out, the black and white duo have had a lucky escape.

Rating:

›The gory details

The frontend isn't much help, so we've decided to list all the games along with the format they're on. If some of your favourite games are listed here then maybe, just maybe, this collection might be worth considering.

Astro Chase (C64)
Boing! (Atari 2600)
Boulder Dash (C64)
Boulder Dash II (C64)
Boulder Dash Construction Kit (Atari ST)
Bristles (C64)
Flip & Flop (C64)
Millenium Warriors (C64)
Omnicron Conspiracy (Atari ST)
Panic Button (C64)
Rent Wars (Atari 8-bit)
Rockford (DOS)
Security Alert (C64)
US Adventure (C64)



Space Invaders Revolution

The most famous shoot-em-up ever blazes its way onto the Nintendo DS, complete with new modes and gameplay

Developer: Dreams **Format:** DS **Price:** £29.99 **Players:** One

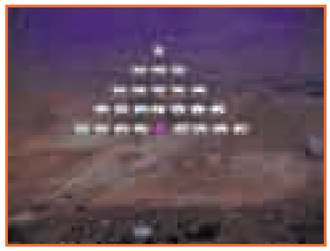


It's almost like some kind of unwritten videogame law, that every new platform must be home to an official version of Taito's celebrated shooter. It's also an edict that any new version must mess with the timeless formula, as if to justify its very existence. Space Invaders Revolution fully abides by both rules, arriving only a couple of months after the release of the DS and adding a bunch of new features.

Of course, at its core is the 1978 original, untouched and untainted. Admittedly, it does struggle to make use of the DS' second screen, but then this is a problem that will be encountered by most developers for the platform. What you get is the customary alien-blasting action in the top screen and a representation of an arcade control panel at the bottom. It's possible to manipulate these on-screen controls using the stylus or wrist strap, but it certainly doesn't feel intuitive or natural, coming across as more of a gimmick than anything else. The D-pad will do us fine, thank you very much. Everything else is spot on however, from the recreation of the multicoloured plastic overlay to the thud-thud bass sound of the Invaders' slow advance, which sounds particularly impressive through the DS' little stereo speakers.

Global invasion

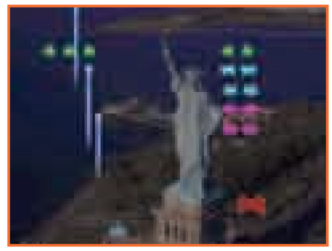
So that's the Classic Mode covered. Which brings us to the scary-sounding New Age Mode. You're basically presented with a world map which displays countries under alien attack. The Invader types vary from location to location, with many taken from Taito's own sequels, including some that blink in and out of view, and others than split into two separate aliens when shot. There's a host of new types too, including tiny Invaders, heavily armoured Invaders, colour-coded Invaders (you have to shoot them in the correct order) and massive mother ship Invaders that have to be blasted away piece by piece.



Some challenges work better than others, but on the whole it's a lot of fun. This is mainly thanks to the increased speed of the game. Rounds are now fast and frantic, testing your reflexes in ways the original couldn't hope to. In fact, after you've played New Age Mode for any amount of time, returning to the original game proves to be a painful experience. Your heart tells you it's still a classic but your head begs to differ.

There's no danger of disowning the original, however, as the points you earn in Classic Mode unlock special weapon power-ups in the New Age game. You can equip your turret with a laser, for example, or call on additional support ships to fight alongside you. Power-ups drain energy though, so they can only be used for a short amount of time, adding a welcome element of strategy to the proceedings.

Space Invaders Revolution works in that it really does offer the best of both worlds. There's the original game, faithfully reproduced for the DS, plus the new expanded mode that stands perfectly well on its own two feet. OK, so it's maybe not exactly full-blown Revolution, but it's certainly superior to last year's Space Invaders Anniversary Collection, which took the original arcade game and bolted on an embarrassing 3D arrangement. Revolution offers much more than that, and deserves pride of place in the long-running series – at least until the next iteration arrives.



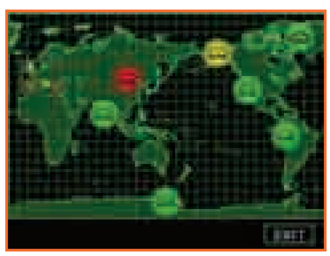
Rating:

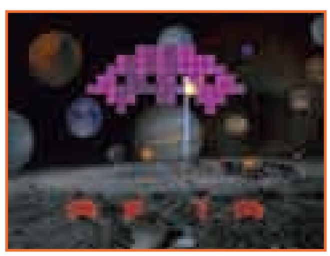
›Close encounters

When people think of Space Invaders, they rarely look beyond the arcade original, the very similar sequel (Space Invaders Part II/Deluxe), and the millions of unofficial home variants. However, Taito did release another three arcade sequels – Return of the Invaders (1985), Super Space Invaders '91 (1990) and Space Invaders '95 (1995). Each game introduced new Invader types and bonus stages, but the core gameplay remained largely the same. There was also a curious semi-official sequel from Midway (distributors of Space Invaders outside of Japan) simply entitled Space Invaders II (1980), that allowed for simultaneous two-player action.











The granddaddy of all multiplayer games is heading back to our screens, and a new generation of gamers will run the Gauntlet once more. As a prelude to the release of the new game, Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows, Aaron Birch looks at the history of the long-running series

Fantasy settings and videogames have always made good bedfellows, with many titles scouring the D&D universe for ideas and inspiration. From this rich source, game developers have crafted many worlds for gamers to explore. But this inspiration hasn't always been limited to stodgy turn-based adventures and complex RPGs. While the world of beards and big hats may seem like the dwelling of bespectacled teenagers, in 1985 a game came along that thrust swords and sorcery into the arcade. The game was Gauntlet.

The arcade originals

Gauntlet was something of a revolution in many different ways – except for the story, that is, because there wasn't one. Players take on the role of one of four heroes. These fearsome combatants are Thor (the Barbarian), Questor (the Elf), Merlin (the Wizard) and Thyra (the Valkyrie). With character chosen, punters then have to battle their way through 100 different dungeons on an endless quest against all sorts of relentless beasties.

Chief amongst Gauntlet's innovations was four-player support. This really made the game something special, enabling you and three mates to take on the evil dungeon dwellers as a single unified force. And thanks to the unique buy-in feature, players could join the fray at will, ensuring that the machine was continually plied with 10-pence pieces. Arcade operators were no doubt grinning more than the kids playing the game.

The four player co-op is great, and is further enhanced by excellent use of sound and speech. As you fight through mazes of foes, the game informs players of various events and warnings, alerting them when one of their team is about to bite the big one, or telling trigger-happy gamers not to shoot the food. What made the game even more of a crowd puller is the fantastic innovation of random levels. After players clear level eight of





the game, further stages are chosen at random from the available levels, meaning two games are rarely the same.

Oddly though, the game is also made fantastically easy thanks to a design bug in the game which was bodged in the truest sense of the word. Due to the possibility of getting totally stuck on a level thanks to a flawed key collecting system, the development team implemented a loophole. Stand still and lose 30 health points and all of the doors in the current stage open. Or even better, if you stand still until you lose 200 health every wall in the level becomes an exit! This makes those harder levels a breeze.

Gauntlet was an instant hit in the arcades, turning in big profits for operators thanks to its clever buy-in system. Unsurprisingly, a sequel (available as both a standalone machine and an upgrade kit for the original) appeared a year later. For Gauntlet II, Atari didn't make too many major changes, preferring to stick with the winning formula.

One of the noticeable additions is the ability for players to choose any character, even if their weapon of choice is already in play. This is made possible thanks to a colour-coding system, so there are no more arguments about who plays as Thyra. But this newfound calm between friends can't last long, as the game introduces a very devious new threat – the 'it' monster. This foe doesn't attack you, or steal your health. Instead, any player touched by this enemy is 'it' and every monster in the current level *only* attacks the tagged player. To get rid of this curse, you have to tag one of your mates, who then becomes 'it'. Cue much arguing and falling out...

Other monsters also appear, the most impressive of which has to be the fire-breathing dragon, the deadliest foe in the game, and an enemy that gives great rewards (such as a ton of loot and an everlasting potion). Also new to the game is the ability to bounce shots off walls, giving players the ability to attack enemies from a much safer distance.

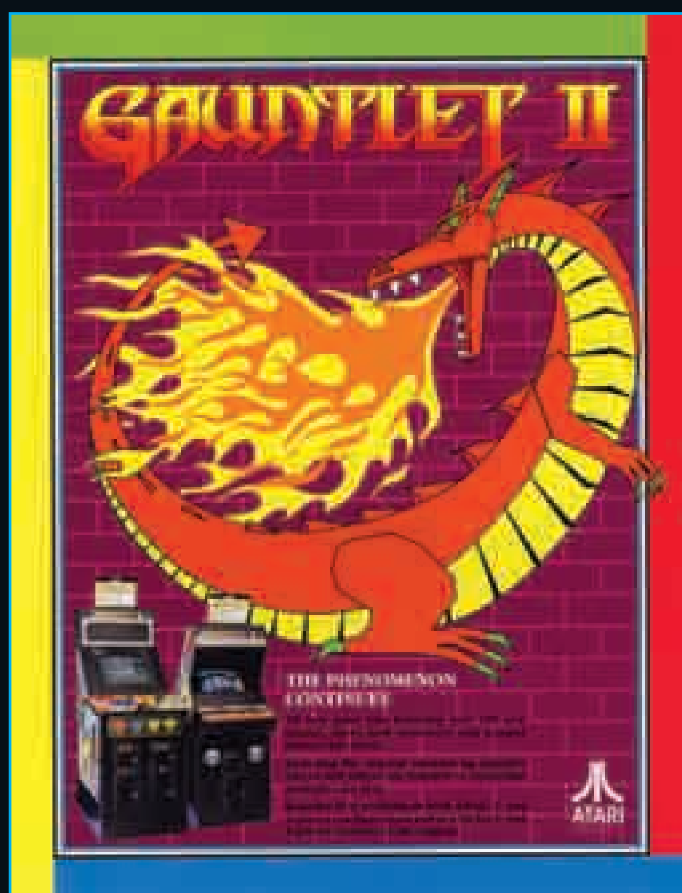
›Been there, done that...

One of the most memorable things about Gauntlet II was the competition Atari ran with the game. During play, the game would provide you with clues to find secret rooms. If you found these, you'd be awarded extra points which would see you scale the high score table. The top scorers would then stand a chance of winning a trendy Gauntlet II t-shirt, or even a US$5,000 savings bond. Although the competition ended in 1986, many of the units still display this competition screen (although this can be hidden using dip switches).















Homeward bound

Because of its huge success in the arcades, it wasn't long before Gauntlet I and II reached the home computing scene, and versions of the multiplayer battler found their way to Commodore 64, Amstrad, Spectrum, Amiga, ST, PC, Master System, GameBoy and NES in one form or another. The original Gauntlet also received its own expansion called Deeper Dungeons, which added a massive 512 extra levels to the already huge game.

With no new arcade sequel, US Gold, publishers of the home computer versions of Gauntlet, revived the series in 1991 with the release of Gauntlet III: The Final Quest on 8/16-bit computers. This third outing took the foundations of the series and smashed them to bits. After all sorts of redesigns, the result was a very different beast to the first two titles.

Replacing the classic top-down view of the original, Gauntlet III opts for a scrolling isometric viewpoint instead and the graphics are beefed up considerably, with better animation and more detailed environments. Much of the monster-bashing gameplay remains, but several new elements are implemented. Joining the original four character classes are four new heroes – Lizard, Stoneman, Iceman and Neptune. Many levels introduce new gameplay mechanics, and it's no longer a matter of simply reaching the exit, as some quests have to be completed along the way. True, these are mainly simple object collection affairs, but it is a step towards making the game more varied.

Sadly though, an isometric Gauntlet just doesn't work. While not exactly a bad idea, it fails mainly due to the over-ambitious goal of producing such a graphically intensive game on the limited formats of the time. The ST and Amiga versions aren't too bad, but the 8-bit ports are slow and almost unplayable. Not a good successor to the excellent originals.

Despite the subtitle of the third game, the series wasn't about to slope off and grow old gracefully just yet. The next outing arrived in 1993 on the Sega Megadrive, courtesy of Tengen. Instead of trying to improve upon the third game's ideas, Gauntlet IV is a basic port of the original games, restoring the classic top-down action. But this doesn't mean that nothing new is introduced. As well as the classic Arcade Mode, Gauntlet IV also features additional game modes. Quest Mode introduces some basic adventure elements and free-roaming levels made up of floors, and even has shops in which you can buy better weapons, while Battle Mode is a deathmatch-style event where up to four players fight to the death. This is old-skool Gauntlet at heart though, and is much better than the flawed third game.

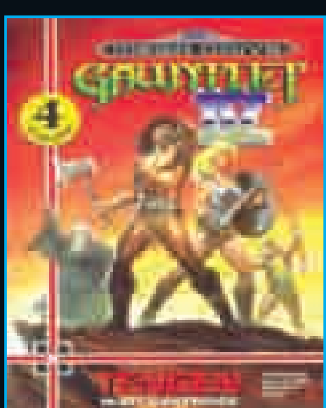
A new age

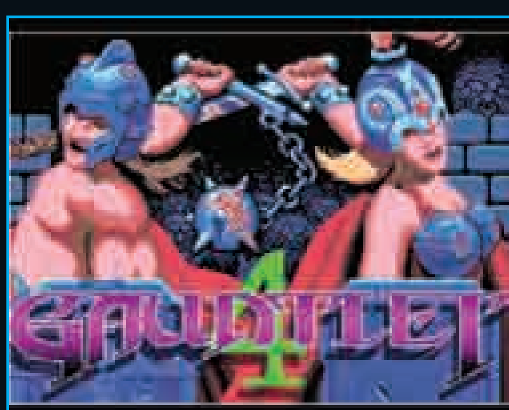
In 1998, the series finally returned to the arcades in the form of Gauntlet Legends. The game once again attempted to bring the licence into the more mainstream modern gaming arena, and is a 3D creation that boasts great graphics and a much more involved quest. Featuring non-linear play over multiple worlds, several bosses, character upgrades, end-of-level cutscenes and four-player support, Gauntlet Legends is a successful modern interpretation of the arcade original. Of particular note is the evolution of the four long standing characters. The Warrior is now a blond beefcake, the Wizard a black pharaoh looky-like, the Elf a sultry female archer and the Valkyrie a buxom brunette.

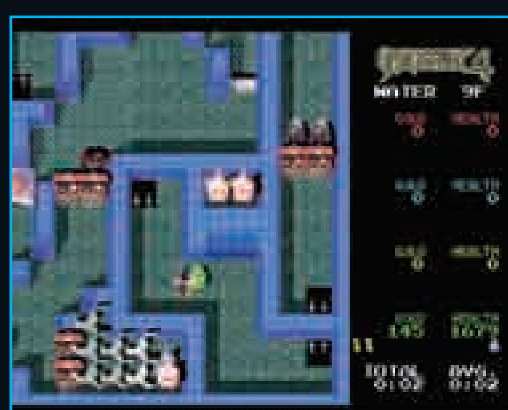
Gauntlet Legends debuted in the arcade and was ported to the PlayStation, Dreamcast and Nintendo 64 in 1999. The following year, the fourth arcade game, Gauntlet: Dark Legacy, was ushered into arcades.

Furthering the advancements made by Legends, Dark Legacy pushes the 3D viewpoint even further and features a range of camera angles. The gameplay remains essentially the same though, still consisting of hunting down monsters while finding keys, treasure and food. Joining the fray are four new characters – Knight, Dwarf, Sorceress and Jester. Bosses are implemented again, and scripted sequences attempt to add a little spice to the rapidly ageing formula. Players can also save their characters' experiences, so the more you play, the better your chosen fighter becomes.

And now, five years after the last adventure, we are due to face the endless mass of ghosts and demons once more. John Romero, of Doom and Quake fame, is heading up the project, and we're promised the most enjoyable and absorbing Gauntlet yet. On top of the classic gameplay, Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows will feature enhanced RPG elements, a new 'junction'



















system, and for the first time ever, players will be able to fight alongside others online. We're also told to expect elements of strategy too, although let's face it, Gauntlet isn't the first game you think of when you consider careful planning and thought.

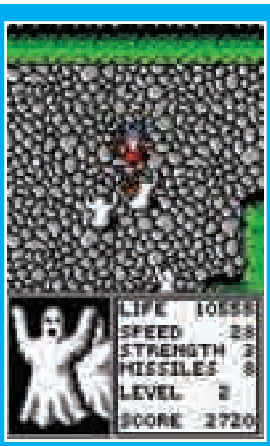
We'll have to wait until later this winter when Seven Sorrows arrives exclusively on PC, PlayStation 2 and Xbox to see if this new take lives up to its promise. Until then, we're off to play tag with the 'it' monster...

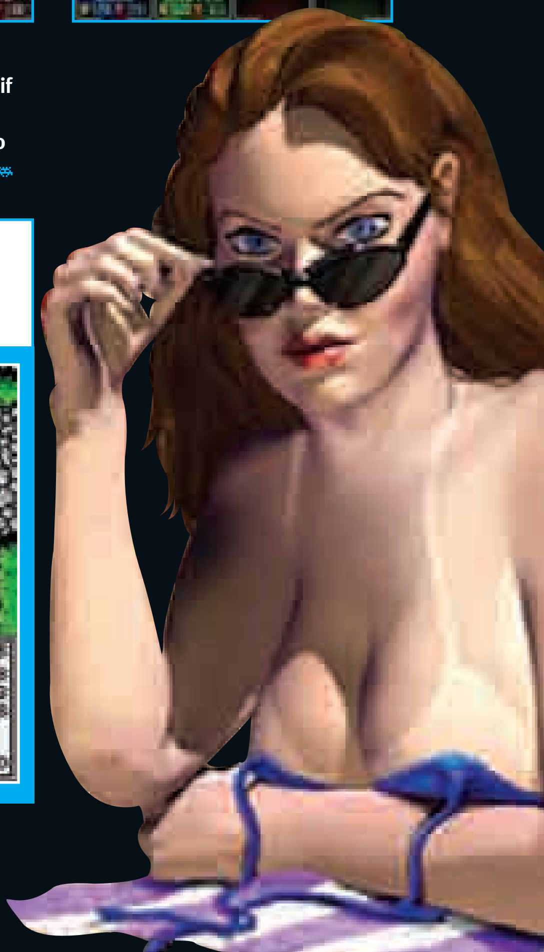
›Third Encounter

In 1990 handheld gamers would see their very own version of Gauntlet in the form of The Third Encounter. This spin-off from the core series was available on the Atari Lynx and developed by Epyx. Oddly though, the game was originally going to be a standalone title called Time Quests and Treasure Chests, but after Atari saw the similarity between the new Epyx game and Gauntlet, a deal was struck to rebrand the title.

This version of the game is very well done in many ways, features four-player support via link up, and even makes full use of the Lynx's large screen by flipping the display 90 degrees. Sadly though, one of the key elements of Gauntlet – the random level selection and item placement – is sorely missing, and every play through is identical to the last.







Welcome back! This month, Jonti Davies delves into the nylon-wearing world of retro sports games in Japan. ***Itadakimasu!***

›Retro champions

Summer is almost here. That might sound a bit far-fetched if you happen to live in Britain. Believe me, though, the weather here in Osaka is great. People are jogging, playing baseball and generally 'getting sporty'. So what better time to consider the great and quirky sports games that have become a part of Japanese gaming culture?

Baseball, referred to here as yakyuu, is the number one sport in Japan. All other sports tend to form an orderly queue, lining up for the famed signature of pro yakyuu. But although baseball leads the way, many of the other games are very popular – and some are veritable Japanese institutions. Sumo, for example, is (for want of a less apt term) huge. Golf is also held in high regard, as are football, tennis and horse racing.

The first competent baseball simulation was Nintendo's own take on the sport. Famicom Baseball is a very playable title with clever gameplay design – its system assigns an almost analog-like dexterity to the Famicom's tough D-pad. Fielding is easy, while bowling (if that's what it's called) is similarly instinctive; controlling the velocity and spin of the ball is simply a matter of holding the D-pad while the ball is in flight. Nifty!

The baseball genre matured in the 16-bit era. At this point in the early 90s, Namco honed its bright and cartoony Family Stadium series on the Super Famicom. On the original Famicom, Family Stadium had enjoyed great success: the first game sold over 2 million copies and the subsequent 87 and 88 revisions were million-sellers. On the SFC, its commercial success was diminished even though the 16-bit games were much better.

In response, Konami introduced its own baseball series – Powerful Pro Yakyuu. You may be familiar with this, as the game features giant-freak-headed players. The series is still going strong today, and remarkably, it hasn't changed a bit. If you haven't played any of the previous 10 installments, don't miss Powerful Pro Yakyuu 11 on the PlayStation 2!





Nintendo's Baseball appeared on the Japanese Famicom in 1983

Grappling fans

Sumo is the most inherently Japanese of sports. Simulations first appeared on the 8-bit Famicom, with Tecmo's imaginatively titled Sumo winning the first round (see this month's Daihitto!). Tecmo updated the series on the Super Famicom, but Imagineer's Waka Taka Sumo Brothers (best game name ever?) must be the Super

›The Tokyo Web

The best of Japan's Internet sites will blow you away

ASCII text art is very popular among Japan's otaku; there's even an occasional TV programme dedicated to the medium. Check out Retrogame's Text Art Gallery (**http://homepage2.nifty.com/retro-game**) for a great introduction to the beauty of ASCII. The recreation of scenes from legendary Famicom RPGs are especially worthwhile.

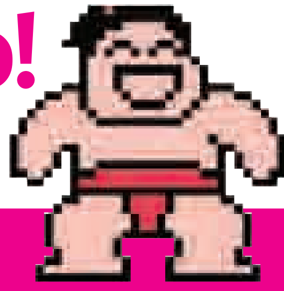
From a 21st century vantage point, it seems there's so much cool retro stuff in Japan that there's no sure way of appreciating it all. The retro scene isn't limited to games, either. The anime tradition has spawned a world of paraphernalia and past trends had their own distinctive impact on Japanese culture. The wealth of retro goodies is depicted beautifully at the Shokugan Spirit online museum at **www.butsuyoku.net/shokugan/index.html**.

If you're in the market for some first-rate parody action, check out the Sega Fantasy VI project – **www.hcn.zaq.ne.jp/cabic508/rsf/frame1.html** – which offers a rare insight into the mindset of many Japanese gamers. Old formats such as the Saturn and PC Engine clearly have great significance even today – they're not merely curios or relics. Watch the Sega Fantasy VI movie and you'll see what we mean.

Finally, be sure to visit the website of Susumu Matsushita (**www.susumumatsushita.com**). Matsushita-san is the artistic genius behind the cartoon characters of Japan's legendary *Weekly Famitsu* magazine, and he's also worked as a lead artist on many triple-A Japanese games. Go and pay your dues!



›Daihitto! Award



This month's 'big hit' honours go to Tecmo's original Famicom title, Sumo

Beautiful Japanese script is imprinted on the screen and it becomes perfectly clear that this is the videogame crystallisation of centuries of Japanese history. Sumo (released in 1987) is to the sport of podgers what Nintendo's Famicom Baseball is to the corrupted game of rounders. It's definitive.

The game's greatest achievement is its blend of the beat-em-up and wrestling styles of gameplay. Combos can be executed with simple Street Fighter-esque tap, tap, tap routines. However, it's also possible to perform holds and there's a fair bit of face slapping. Of course, the objective in sumo is simply to chuck the opponent out of the ring. The CPU-controlled competitors have primitive AI – this is a Famicom game, after all – but plug in a second controller and hours of traditional Japanese fun will ensue.

Sumo's graphics are surprisingly detailed – check out those spectators! – and the sound is strangely atmospheric. It's one of those rare games that combines a strong sense of history and tradition with the simple pleasures of button tapping. And, even more remarkably, it has a very good level of depth. There are so many characters here, and they each look different and have unique strengths and weaknesses. For an 8-bit Famicom fighting game, Sumo is incredibly good.





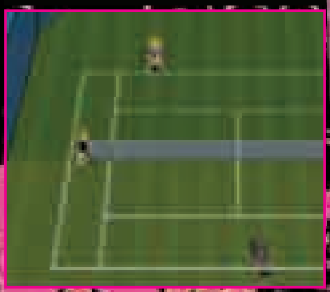
Famicom's 'Yokozuna' (Yokozuna = champion of sumo.)

On the court, Family Tennis is arguably the finest Namco sports title on the Super Famicom. Yes, it's basic, but the core tennis gameplay is just about perfect. This is where Smash Court was born really, but the gimmick-free gameplay and the sublime Super Famicom controller ensure that Family Tennis is an even better package than its successors.

Horse racing games have only recently started to appear in the West, but previously they were largely the domain of Japanese gamers. ASCII's Derby Stallion games on the Super Famicom paved the way for Sega's Winning Post games and Jaleco's arcade-y Gallop Racer titles. The first few Derby Stallion releases were million-sellers in the early 90s. Fans of Susumu Matsushita's work will be impressed with the artwork on the Derby Stallion games' packaging. As for the games in the boxes… um, well, they're horse racing games.

Japanese sporting culture infiltrates many areas of the retro scene, and some of these old games are great fun. Next month we'll look at another culture/games crossover as we examine Japanese folklore, historical characters that appear in classic Japanese games, and much more besides.





Family Tennis was the forerunner to the Smash Court Tennis games that are still released today





Horse racing titles like Derby Stallion are amazingly popular in Japan, often topping the game charts

Desert Island Disks

Over the course of one evening and several pints, Paul Drury talked Teletext with Mr Biffo and Mr Hairs, the guys behind Digitiser

Man Diary – AD 2005

I have managed to get a job as a games journalist on Teletext and the long hours and constant beatings I receive from management have resulted in me having intense hallucinations. I recently thought I saw the ghostly form of Noel Edmonds floating above my Megadrive and imagined I was playing a Mario fighting game with the moustached plumber wearing bondage gear. Then, somehow, I made Dirty Den say the C-word on EastEnders.

Imagine my surprise when I found out it wasn't an hallucination at all!

If this paragraph brings back happy memories of the eminently employable 'The Man' and his strange tales of clown shoe shops and pet swans, then Mr Biffo (aka Paul Rose) and Digitiser, the Teletext games section he co-founded and presided over between 1993 and 2003, will be familiar to you. Maybe it became an integral part of your daily routine – get up, use toilet, put kettle on, check Digi – and you're already reminiscing about the terrible jokes of The Man's Daddy, the mumbling Zombie Dave and the fake film script extracts.

If none of this is making any sense, then you've messed up



and missed out on a decade of surreal humour, sparkling wit and the unexpected inclusion of minor *EastEnders* character Danny Taurus as a centrefold, sporting a hairstyle which bore an uncanny resemblance to an erect penis. Oh, and they wrote about games too.

"The funny stuff wasn't planned," explains Biffo. "We were just trying to do stuff that shouldn't be there, that made no sense being there at all. I don't know if I'm annoyed the games coverage is less remembered. Not really. But without that, it wouldn't have worked."

And it certainly did work. Despite Biffo describing Teletext as "the scrag end of journalism", the pages attracted an audience of 1.5 million viewers at Digitiser's height in the mid-90s and boasted some celebrity fans. TV presenter Violet Berlin gushingly describes Biffo and his partner in crime, Tim 'Mr Hairs' Moore, as "the best videogame journalists in the world", and admits to stalking them before becoming a regular Digi columnist. Then there's Alex Garland, author of *The Beach*, who successfully won a competition involving holding up a placard bearing the legend 'Digitiser = Filth' in an exotic location (he persuaded a friend to do just this atop a temple in



Thailand), and was planning a feature on the Digi phenomenon for *The Independent* before he hit the big time.

But how do you describe a job that involves knocking out daily updates on videogames and industry news, and accompanying them with a cast of nonsense-spouting characters rendered in the primitive blocks of Teletext graphics?

"When people asked what I did, I tended to mumble and change the subject. Tim called it the 'choke on the cashew moment'. To this day, my mum doesn't know what I actually did for a living."



Mr Biffo (right) and Mr Hairs, presumably celebrating Digitiser's 10 years at the top

Earning stripes

It should be expected then that the route to such an unusual career would not be straight-forward. Though Biffo's childhood in London, which he still calls home, did involve many hours playing on an Atari 2600 and later a Spectrum, his programming didn't go much beyond writing rude words on the shop display computers in John Menzies, though he does recall with a grimace his one attempt at game design.

"This is terrible, and I was only 11 and didn't really know what the word meant, but I did produce a design on paper for 'Ronnie the Rapist'. It was loosely based on the Horace games and I did a series of screenshots of mazes in parks and bushes... you can gather what happened. Shameful."

Biffo spent much of his time at school drawing and a career in graphic design seemed most likely. At 15, he got a part-time job at Ladbrokes producing images for its in-house information service and even succeeded in creating a Pole Position pastiche spread over six screens – quite an achievement with only 16 frames of animation on a loop. His increasing ability in the archaic, highly specialised niche of Teletext-style graphics led to a job creating images for the Wembley scoreboard ("probably the cushiest job I've ever had – my boss was at the other end of the stadium and I never saw him.") and at the end of 1992, he secured a position at Teletext. The company had just won the contract from Oracle and were actively looking for new ideas.

"I ended up sitting opposite this guy Tim Moore, who I thought was a bit stand-offish and a bit flash – he dressed well and I didn't, and he just seemed more experienced and worldly wise. I didn't know what to make of him. He was writing for the teen section, which included game reviews, and being a games fan, I suggested to him we did a whole games section, even though I hadn't ever done any writing before. He just shrugged – he was kind of non-committal and saw it as a job, whereas I was this enthusiastic 21-year-old – but he said OK, as it got him away from writing about lipstick."

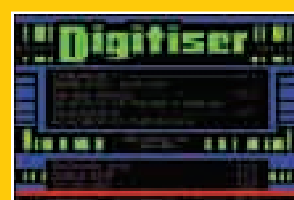
The management also said yes, and soon the pair were inseparable. "I clicked with Tim straight away when we started writing together. We shared that sense of humour and were basically naughty little boys trying to make each other laugh, which was weird because we were both parents. And we were both aware that Teletext was shit, yet we had this ludicrously good job of reviewing games with complete autonomy. We decided everything and no one saw it before it went out. We sat in this cubicle in the corner away from the editor's office, looking over each other's shoulders and tinkering, just trying to out-do each other."

It was an unorthodox setup and helped to make Digitiser unique. The limit of 60 words per page and daily deadlines meant there was no room for waffle. The lack of screenshots left space for the array of colourful characters and their bizarre insights. A lead time of three minutes gave them a huge advantage over printed games magazines when it came to revealing industry developments. Perhaps most tellingly, the very



›Web-Me-Doo

There are several Digi appreciation sites on the Web, but the one we're most drawn to is located at **www.moleman.freeserve.co.uk**. Featuring the complete cast of characters and some classic pages from the Digi's glorious past, it's a fitting tribute to the toil of Biffo and Hairs.



nature of the medium – pages were visible for a day, then gone forever, with no record ever kept (though later, fan sites would lovingly archive much of the material) – meant it wasn't even a case of becoming tomorrow's fish and chip wrappers.

"We didn't endlessly rewrite stuff – we'd do it, chuck it up on screen and forget it. We didn't care as much about what we wrote because it was so disposable and in an ironic way, the fact it doesn't exist anywhere has meant it's endured. People will always remember it as slightly better than it was. I have this feeling that a lot was just being self-indulgent, Tim and I making each other laugh. But it seemed to strike a chord."

To be this good...

Their humour, honesty and fearless independence led to a devoted following of readers, though Biffo admits if they'd known just how many people were running downstairs in a morning to switch on, they probably wouldn't have been so funny.

"We didn't know people were watching, certainly not till near the end. Yeah, we got loads of letters, but they tended to come from the same people. We thought there was about 19 people totally obsessed by us and everyone else wasn't bothered. That's probably how we managed to put so many noses out of joint."

Right from the off, the pair incurred the wrath of the Amiga community by declaring they weren't covering a "dying format" ("We had loads of irate Amiga owners complaining and we relented – in fact we managed to blag a free Amiga out of it all"), and had little truck with self-important PR reps, as Biffo's retelling of a visit to Sega's PR company illustrates.

"The bloke had kept us waiting in reception for ages and we overheard what games were going to be bundled with the 32X, which we reported. He was livid. Then we saw a pre-release copy of Mario 64 playing in his office. We reported that and he was livid again. And we drew a big cock in his notebook when he wasn't looking. I imagine he wasn't best pleased with that either."

Interestingly, Teletext management was initially very positive about Digitiser, with the features editor taking Biffo and Hairs out to lunch and declaring "You boys are the saviours of Teletext!" The honeymoon was short lived though, after Digitiser made an apparently innocuous remark about someone playing on a Megadrive, when an image of Noel Edmonds had mysteriously appeared above the console.

"The same editor rang me up and asked if it was supposed to be satire. I mean, 'No, he really did come out of a Megadrive!?' But somehow, this led to a headline in *The Sun* saying 'Teletext Rapped Over Sick Videogame Joke'. We were immediately labelled as troublemakers. It was a constant battle after that, and we were only a month old. There were forces in Teletext that really hated us. We weren't being paranoid – we've seen the secret memos that got sent round."





The suits, the squares

The ongoing interference from management manifested itself in the frequent removal of whole pages of Digitiser, without informing the boys, or even the changing of punch lines to the already barely understandable jokes of The Man's Daddy. It appears the hatred was mainly borne out of a lack of understanding – the powers that be just didn't get the jokes, and that made them angry – though you have to have some sympathy for the hapless sub-editors who were responsible for sifting through the pages of esoteric innuendos and catchphrases.

"They were paranoid we were sneaking in filth – which just made us want to do it more. And they'd usually miss the really dodgy stuff, and overact crazily when I mentioned 'the 3 RRRs' or said 'finger the index'.

"I remember one sub-ed called Emma – subs changed every week or so – and we'd just done this spoof French-English dictionary. It was Friday afternoon and she'd had a whole week of wondering 'What does that word mean?' and 'Is that rude?', which had obviously worn her down. Her eyes were sunken and she just said 'Please, I can't be bothered to read it, just take it off and put it on next week when it's someone else's job'."

Yes, producing Digitiser was a job like no other, and Biffo fondly remembers those first four years working with Mr Hairs as "the best time I've had doing anything." But all good things come to an end, particularly if your bosses are looking to give one of you the push and as Biffo was vitally useful to Teletext as a whole for his graphics work, it was Mr Hairs who was to get the boot first...

...And right on cue, in walks the man himself, Tim 'Mr Hairs' Moore, as charming and dapper as Biffo had described, and proceeds to retell the strange tale of how former *GamesMaster* extra and games hack Dave Perry got him the sack.

"Dave was on our case because we'd called one of the mags he worked on 'irrelevant'. One of his lackeys phoned up and threatened to sue, so we changed it to 'irreverent'. Then an industry insider we knew told us Dave had been hauled over the coals by his boss about poor circulation figures. I got dragged into my editor's office – Biffo was off on paternity leave – and he demanded I tell him my source. I refused and got fired. They even frog-marched me off the premises, in case I tried to put a spunking cock on the Teletext index page, which was viewed by 25 million people daily. To be fair, we had got that graphic all ready for just this sort of occasion."

With Mr Hairs gone, Biffo kept on writing, though he describes the next four years as "a long drawn out death", a rather harsh verdict, as Digitiser retained its inimitable style and in fact the accolades from fans and complaints from detractors actually increased. The roller coaster ride continued unabated until the tragic events of September 11th. With the holiday advertising revenue that Teletext relied on so heavily in



terminal decline after the terrorist attacks, Biffo was unceremoniously told by his superiors that Digi's content was to be halved and he must remove all the humour.

"This horrible Irish troll, who'd only been in the job two weeks, told me of the decision. He was aggressive, offensive and needlessly nasty. He said the 'Python-esque humour' excluded people and it had to go. I should try and make Digitiser 'bland'. What kind of ludicrous editorial edict is that?"

Demoralised, but still appreciating the pretty good money Teletext paid and the free games, Biffo continued 'out of habit', until the following summer, when the sheer volume of complaints about the new sanitised Digitiser forced the management to make an abrupt volte-face. He was called into a meeting, where the bosses acknowledged their mistake and pleaded with him to put things back to how they once were.

Mr Hairs can't resist chipping in: "I don't miss Teletext at all, but I'd have loved to have been at that meeting, shovelling humble pie down their throats."

It's a poignant reminder of the bond between these two hugely talented friends. When Biffo goes to the bar, Hairs is quick to praise his partner's passion for games, which kept the whole thing going, and when it's time for Hairs' round, Biffo eulogises on how much Tim taught him about the art of writing, describing their time working together as 'my university' (Tim's way with words recently bagged him 'Travel Writer of the Year' at the Press Awards). And the mutual back-slapping continues as I get the drinks in, and Biffo enthuses about our own *Retro Gamer*.

"When I got the issue with the *Your Sinclair* tribute, I realised how much it must have influenced how I write. I was genuinely moved. And it brought back some lovely images of T'zer in short skirts."

Moc-moc-a-moc!

So as Digitiser approached its 10th anniversary, it was restored to its former glory, at least for a while. Then Biffo received an ominous call from his editor on 8 December 2003, stating they were "planning some changes" in the new year.

"I turned to my wife and said 'They're doing it again'. I just didn't want the stress, plus I'd just got job offers from *Eastenders* and a kid's TV show and I didn't need the money. It just seemed the right time to call it a day. Digitiser had been 10 years of my life. It was kind of like a play – Tim leaving was the 'oh fuck' moment at the end of Act One, then having to remove the humour was the 'oh shit' at the close of Act Two, and then them admitting they were wrong and letting me go out on a high was just the perfect ending. And I did get to use that spunking cock after all."

Yes, Turner the Worm 'being sick' did indeed grace the final Digi page, but Biffo hadn't quite left games journalism behind. He still writes a regular column for *Edge* magazine, where the anarchic spirit that made Digitiser such an adored institution lives on, and some of that pushing against authority continues in his script writing for *My Parents Are Aliens* and *EastEnders*. So, just how did he get Dirty Den to swear on national TV?

"I wrote the line 'We'll be alright with these two big Constables' and Lesley Grantham said it perfectly – he almost hyphenated it. Bless him."

As last orders is called at the Glasshouse Stores in Soho where

"This horrible Irish troll, who'd only been in the job two weeks, told me of the decision. He was aggressive, offensive and needlessly nasty. He said the 'Python-esque humour' excluded people and it had to go. I should try and make Digitiser 'bland'. What kind of ludicrous editorial edict is that?"

›Casting call

It had a cast of thousands, but when Digitiser is rightfully made into a Hollywood movie, who would Biffo like to see in the lead roles?



"Simon Callow playing Edward Lear and Jean Reno starring as Le Chef. And The Man's Daddy would have to be in it. He was always my favourite – he wasn't funny and that's why he was funny. I knew half the people reading it would be scratching their heads, going 'What's this?' But as he was a half elephant, half insect hybrid, he'd have to appear as a special effect. No human could portray him."





Since the days of Digitiser, Paul spends his time writing scripts for TV, radio and, yes, videogames



we've been drinking all night, I decide it was appropriate to get a round of gin and tonics in, the drink so often praised in the pages of Digitiser, and wonder, as Biffo and Hairs frequently used the excuse of "being drunk" if readers disagreed with their verdict on a game, whether their writing was ever enhanced by the liberal use of alcohol?

"No'" they both assure me. "It was all done on tea, coffee and Quavers." So, describing themselves memorably as "pilled-up Jacobites" was also factually inaccurate then? There's a pause. "Well there was this time when Ocean Software did this fantastic trip to an Oasis gig, and I spent hours looking at a biscuit..." confesses Biffo.

As we sup up, Biffo regales me with one final anecdote, a testament to the devotion of Digitser's readership.

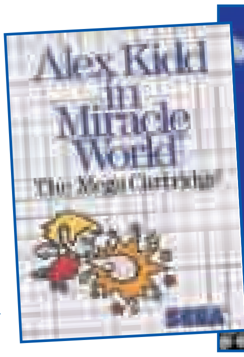
"When I finally left, I announced on the *Edge* forum I was having a leaving do here, in this pub, and people came from all over the country. I think it was only then I realised how big Digi was, and by then it was over. It was one of the best nights of my life, but I wouldn't want that all the time. It was like being in a freakshow. Alex Garland was there, people from Zed Two... and there I was chatting with this bloke, when suddenly he hugged me and said 'Thank you, I grew up reading Digitiser'. It was slightly surreal. I mean, it was only this pissy little Teletext thing." Maybe, chaps. But it seemed so much more.

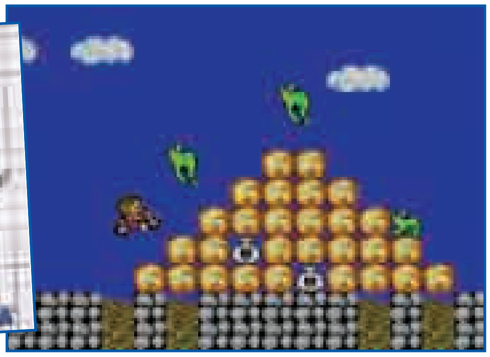
›Mr Biffo's Desert Island Disks

Alex Kidd in Miracle World

Sega, Master System, 1986

Undoubtedly, there have been better platform games both before and since, but Alex Kidd was the first game I bought on my Master System, and my Master System was the first thing I bought with my first ever wage packet. I'd just got a job working for Ladbrokes Racing as a graphic designer, and couldn't believe quite how much I was getting paid. I hadn't realised at the time that the idea was to make it last the whole month. But Alex Kidd, and the Alex Kidd music, always bring back happy memories of my marginally more innocent days. Plus I'm a firm believer that the side-on platformer is a genre in need of a proper resurrection.

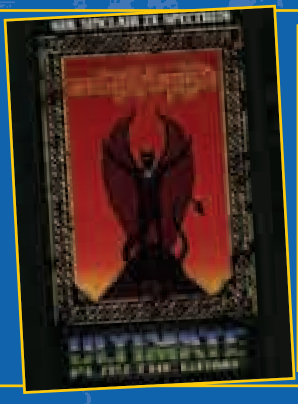


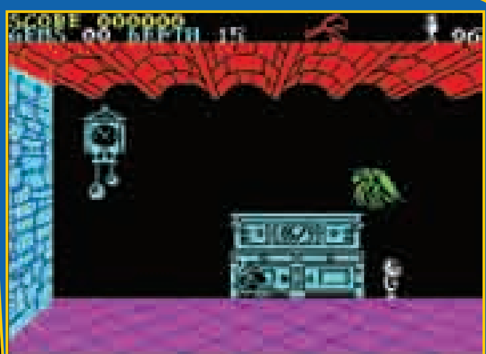


Underwurlde

Ultimate, Spectrum, 1984

Terrible confession time now. I can remember going to Brent Cross shopping centre with my Mum, and having to entertain myself while she bought my Christmas presents. I can remember going into John Menzies, and picking up a copy of Do They Know It's Christmas. And I can remember getting home, sneaking into my parents' bedroom, sneaking back to my bedroom with the copy of Underwurld she'd bought me, and loading it up. And then having to act surprised when I unwrapped it on Christmas morning. Shocking.

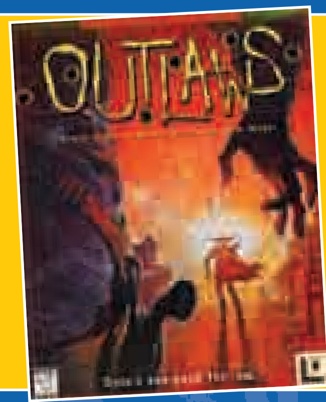


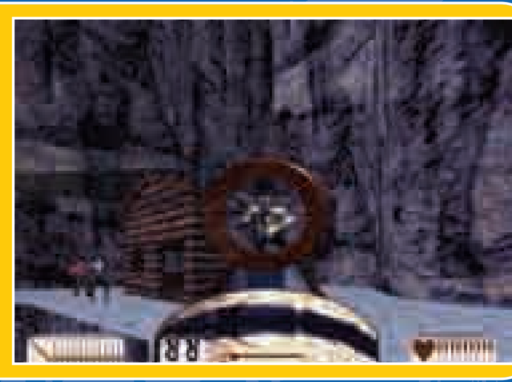


Outlaws

LucasArts, PC, 1997

Whilst Half-Life is probably my favourite game of all time, Outlaw gets on this list by virtue of being the underdog. It's one of the most underrated games of all time, and pioneered the use of sniper scopes, and train levels – both elements of the first-person shooter which are still being recycled today. It was incredibly atmospheric. I'll always remember being trapped inside a fort, down to my last sliver of health, barely any bullets, surrounded by bandits calling me out...

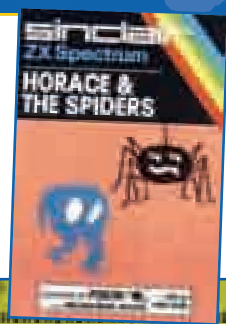




Horace and the Spiders

Psion, Spectrum, 1982

Christmas morning, 1982. I came downstairs to see our TV flashing the message "Merry Christmas, Paul", courtesy of a brand new Spectrum my dad had sat up programming the night before. Horace and the Spiders was the first game I loaded up (I also got 3D Haunted Hedges). Whilst I'll gladly admit it's a pile of gritty turds, for the sheer nostalgic twangs it invokes, it has to be in this list.

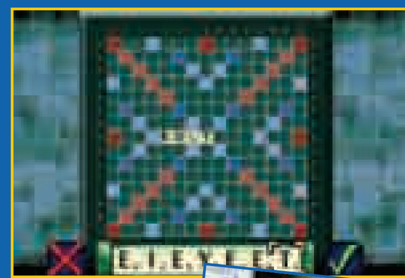




Scrabble

Ubisoft, GBA, 2002

I stumbled upon this quite by accident, when I was staying in a hotel room in Brighton a couple of years ago. I don't even know where it came from – it was sitting at the bottom of my daughter's GBA carry case, but I certainly don't remember buying it. It was the only game I could play and actually see what I was doing – the GBA was never designed for low-light conditions. I was immediately addicted. After Tetris it's probably the most pure handheld game there is.



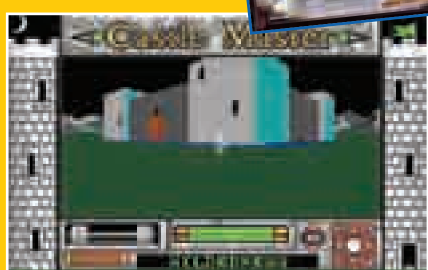


Castle Master

Incentive, Atari ST, 1990

I'm a first-person shooter addict, and it's probably fair to say that it all started with Castle Master. Ground-breaking 3D graphics made for a stunningly eerie environment that literally gave me nightmares. You've not had a bad dream until you've dreamt there's a giant, fire-breathing polygon living in your attic. I also remember there was a hollow wooden cow in there somewhere. The game, not the dream. Or my bed.

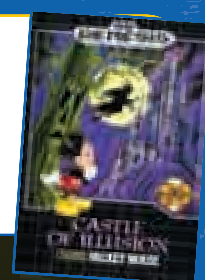


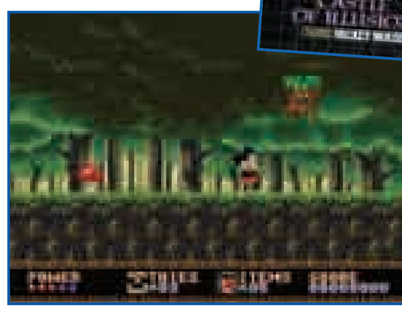


Castle of Illusion starring Mickey Mouse

Sega, Megadrive, 1990

To this day I still think this is one of the best-looking, best-sounding platform games ever. For me it was the game that finally justified the £189 I paid for my Megadrive – a controversial purchase at the time, given that my girlfriend was expecting a baby. The parallax scrolling made my hair stand on end, and the final boss level is truly creepy.



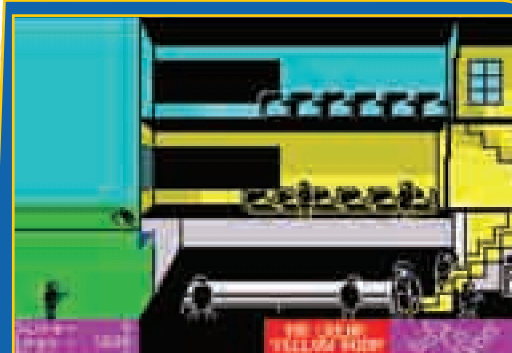


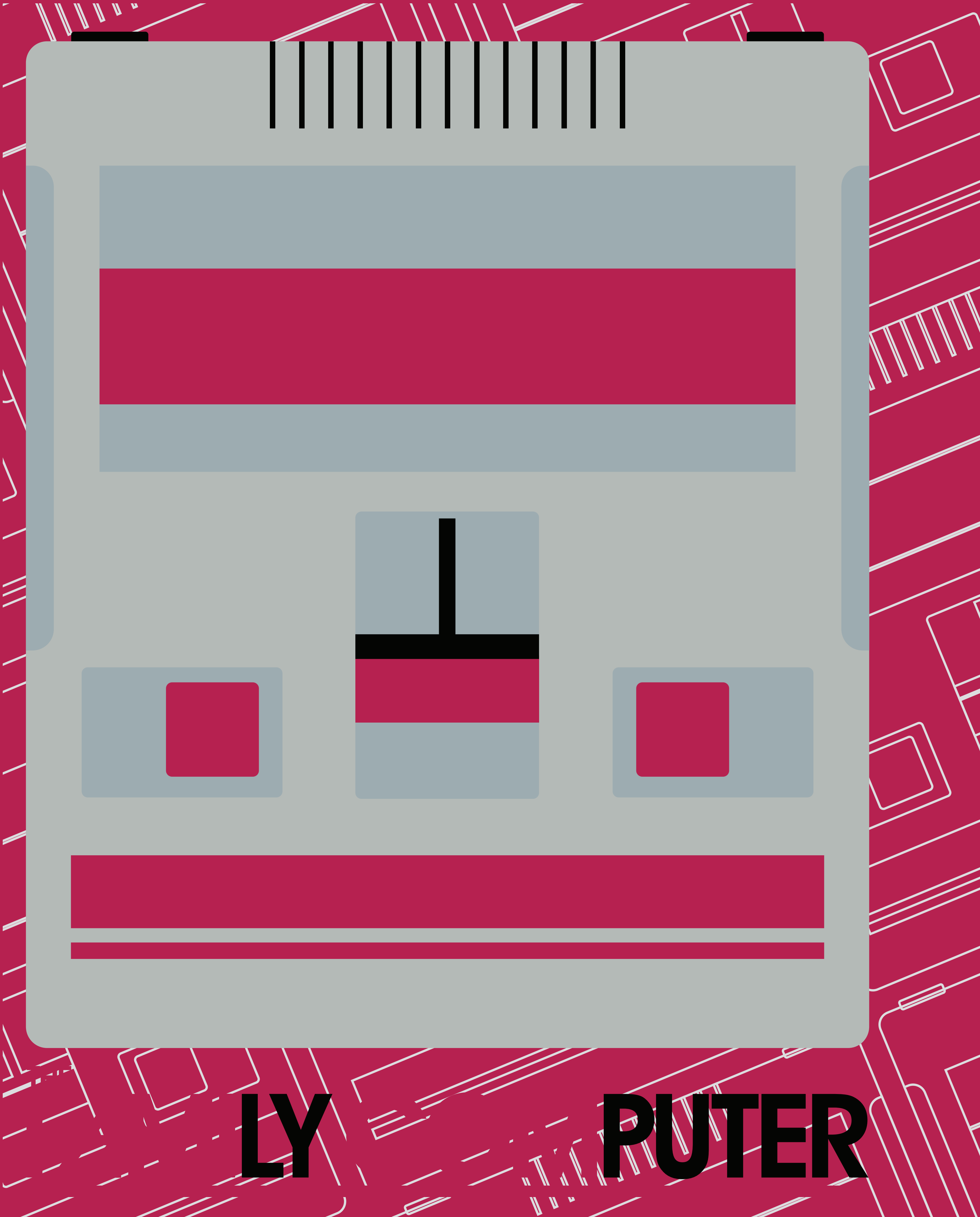
Skool Daze/Back 2 Skool

Microsphere, Spectrum, 1985

Despite the confusing, convoluted controls and simplistic graphics, these are without a doubt my most fondly remembered games. They're an absolute pain to play – with a different key for each specific action – but as a 12 year old it was sublime to play a game with a setting that I could relate to. You can stick Trashman and Everyone's A Wally in that category too – fantastic exponents of mundane, British suburbia. Do today's kids really relate to ghetto pimps, and micro-skirted zombie killers?






LY PUTER

With over 50 million units sold worldwide, the Famicom/NES is one of the most popular consoles of all time and maintained production for an amazing 20 years. During this time the system was home to many of today's biggest franchises and pioneered several hardware innovations. John Szczepaniak examines the original Japanese Famicom and its Disk System sibling



The Famicom. The original Japanese design was deemed too toy-like for Western tastes

The Japanese counterpart to the West's Nintendo Entertainment System was superior in almost every respect. It's perhaps surprising, then, that few people outside Japan know the full impact it had on gaming history. Production of the Famicom was discontinued in late 2003, having outlasted every other console ever developed. Even then, the assembly line was only stopped due to difficulty in obtaining the necessary electronic components.

To commemorate the Famicom's passing, various groups set about creating dedication memorabilia. The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography held a Famicom arts exhibition from 4 December 2003 to 8 February 2004, showcasing every game released for the Japanese machine, along with various peripherals and model versions. Enterbrain, in association with *Famitsu* (the famous Japanese gaming magazine), commissioned a commemorative Famicom DVD, featuring interviews, the televised StarSoldier tournament from 1986, and the results of a *Famitsu* poll of Japan's 100 favourite Famicom games (not surprisingly, it consisted heavily of RPGs and shoot-em-ups), which included in-game footage.


The commemorative DVD, featuring Japan's best-loved Famicom games

The Famicom was launched on 15 July 1983. Initially, only a handful of games were released for the system, including Donkey Kong and Popeye. Designed based on the ideology that "form is superior to mass", Nintendo wanted to avoid Atari's mistake of releasing vast quantities of low-quality games that had eventually crashed the US games market. It believed that in order for the system to succeed, the software would have to be of the highest quality. The Famicom was an instant success, with long queues forming and shipments selling out as fast as they could be delivered. To maintain quality, Nintendo placed very strict licensing restrictions on prospective developers. Licensing costs were high and licencees were only allowed to release a certain number of games per year to ensure that the titles were of a relatively high quality.

Japan was suddenly hooked. Everyone, from schoolchildren to salary men, was playing the Famicom, the lure of Shogi and Mario simply proving too strong. In Japan, gaming was not merely a child's pastime and even professionals, such as the famous copywriter Shigesato Itoi (Mother series), had their interests peaked by the possibility of increasing their 'creative assets' by writing good games. Many of today's established games designers started producing titles for the system during this time. Satoshi Tajiri, the creator of Pokémon, first cut his teeth on the Famicom hardware back in the 80s, creating the cult classic Quinty. To do this, Tajiri bought old circuit boards from Akihabara junk shops and combined them with parts from his Famicom system. The legendary Shigeru Miyamoto also began his console career on the Famicom and Hideo Kojima hoped to be assigned to the machine when he joined Konami.

The Famicom was still very popular well into the 1990s, so much so that Nintendo was reluctant to release its successor, the Super Famicom, and only did so due to the pressure of rival companies releasing their own superior hardware. Regardless of this, the fascination with the Famicom remained, and in 1993 the console was remodelled to celebrate its 10th anniversary. Many features were removed in order to lower the cost, but the Famicom AV had a much sleeker and more compact appearance. Software development for the system officially halted in the mid-90s and the final game released in Japan was Takahashi Meijin no Boukenjima IV (aka Adventure Island 4) on 24 June 1994. Hardware production, however, continued until 2003, long after its Western counterpart's sales had ground to a halt. In fact, in the years leading up to the machine's 20th anniversary, output actually had to be increased to meet the demands of the many adults who were buying the machines anew in order to relive their childhood gaming memories.

The Famicom is a landmark system, not least because it introduced many innovations now



The Famicom AV appeared in 1993, featuring AV composite output (hence the name)



In Japan, the Famicom came with illustrated comic books explaining usage

taken for granted. Even today, the cross-shaped directional pad and Start/Select buttons are used on modern controller layouts, such as the GameBoy Advance and PlayStation 2 – Nintendo's handheld Game & Watch series was the first to utilise D-pad technology. It was also the first system to use voice-recognition technology via a small microphone built in to the control pad. In Bungeling Bay the second player could control his fighters by shouting into it, while Kid Icarus was able to gain discounts if the player spoke directly to the game's merchants. In Takeshi no Chousenjou, the player was told to sing Karaoke-style into the microphone in order to progress further, though few succeeded since the voice technology wasn't entirely reliable.

Whilst many believe the Sega Dreamcast was the first console to go online, the Famicom actually got there first. Several network adaptors and modems were released that plugged into the system (so various connection setups could be used), enabling users to check text messages and horse-racing results. Sadly, online gaming was never implemented.

As the Family Computer name claims, it was also possible to turn the console into a form of semi-computer, complete with its own unique programming software (Family BASIC) and keyboard. This enabled many users to start programming their own simple homemade games and get a taste for the hardware. Speaking of hardware, its Western equivalent also set precedents – specifically, the region lock-out that stopped US games being played on a European NES and vice versa, which infuriated gamers and went on to become a console standard of the present day.

Games-wise, Nintendo made good on its promise and released large amounts of extremely high-quality software. Famous franchises such as Final Fantasy, Dragon Quest and Metroid started life on the Famicom, and though first released on the MSX, series like Goemon, Castlevania and Metal Gear also made their console debut on the system. Readers might be unaware that a Biohazard/Resident Evil semi-prequel was also made for it. Entitled Sweet Home, it was an RPG by Capcom that featured several key gameplay elements that would go on to heavily influence the survival horror series that followed. Many would argue that survival horror started with Alone in the Dark, but some credit should at least be given to the Famicom.

Advances in technology and design scope meant Famicom and FDS games could increase in size and quality. Games began incorporating unique gameplay elements – a good example of this is Otocky. A music-influenced product combined with classic shooter gameplay, Otocky was described as a cross between media art and videogames – Rez is its closest modern-day equivalent.

Though not quite so boast-worthy today, the Famicom also had a hefty list of licences and franchise endorsements. A game featuring the antics of Kiss-influenced rockers Seikima



Family BASIC, Famicom coding at your fingertips. A tape recorder was also released, allowing users to back up their precious programs

›Disky business



In February 1986, Nintendo took the bold step of releasing a Disk System add-on for the Famicom. Although this wasn't as successful as it could or indeed should have been, it had the potential to change the face of gaming forever. Created to lower the price of games by using proprietary-made rewritable disks, it was possible to purchase new games on a regular basis as easily and cheaply as renting VHS or DVD movies today. Gamers could buy a blank disk from Nintendo costing Y2,000 (around £10) and for Y500 (£2.50) write any of the supported titles onto this disk via small vending machines found in stores throughout Japan. Pre-loaded disk games complete with manuals were also available from around Y3,000 (£15), but some FDS titles were exclusively download only. This effectively reduced the cost of cartridge production, which at the time was very expensive, thereby lowering prices considerably and allowing for the production of much larger games. As the disks were rewritable, it meant that any game you didn't like could be easily replaced with a new one and game data saved without the need for costly battery backup. Titles such as Metroid, which in the West had a complex password system, could incorporate save features in Japan because of this. Many games were converted from cartridge and several disk exclusives were also produced, including Super Mario Bros. 2 (Lost Levels).

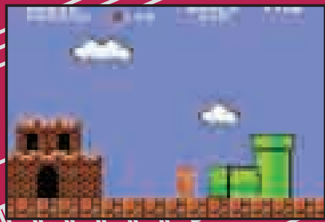
Sadly though, pirates soon found ways of copying the disks, and the market was flooded with cheap bootlegs. In addition, the cost of cartridge manufacturing started decreasing, resulting in bigger cartridges that surpassed the memory limits of the disks. All of this resulted in companies slowly abandoning the FDS. Another problem for the hardware was that its drive belts were notorious for breaking. Later, combined cartridge-and-disk systems were released by companies such as Sharp, but it was too late. FDS software development was eventually stopped, and in 1993 the vending machines were dismantled. Had it been more successful, the gaming world would probably be a very different place.

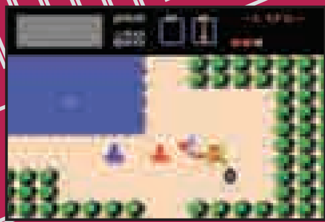


One of the many Disk Writer machines that gamers could use to download the latest FDS games

(Seikima II: Akuma no Gyakushu), received surprising acclaim. Takeshi 'Beat' Kitano had a game designed to his specifications, and congressman Masuzoe created a game about "intra-office politics" that "taught you the art of how to get ahead in life" (conversely, congressmen in the US more often than not try to ban videogames). A multitude of manga and anime licences were released, such as Dirty Pair and the rather excellent Patlabor. Several major licences were to remain unknown outside of Japan though, such as Master Takahashi. Having participated in and been crowned winner of Hudson's StarSoldier National Rally 16-Blast championship tournament, the hero of the game went on to star as the lead character in Takahashi Meijin no Boukenjima, and was recognised by children across Japan. Rather than setting up a similar tournament in the West, Hudson localised the game – Takahashi was changed to Master Higgins, and the game title became Adventure Island. Interestingly enough, the game was released in arcades as Wonderboy.

On the whole, the Japanese Famicom games were vastly superior to their Western localised equivalents. Apart from the fact that only a small proportion of the available triple-A titles were brought over, nearly all of them had butchered cover art (Mega Man), were censored to some degree (Ice Climber), or suffered from the most bastardised translations ever witnessed (Metal Gear). The regular re-interpretation and modification of games was wholly unnecessary – stages were removed, sprites redrawn and difficulty levels changed for reasons that have never become apparent.







Just some of the titles that debuted on the Famicom. From top to bottom: Super Mario Bros, Zelda and Metroid

The popularity of Nintendo's first interchangeable games console is plain to see if you take a quick look at the Internet – there's a vast array of dedicated fan sites, chronicling even the most obscure and bizarre facts (bootleg system designs and overclocking the processor anyone?). The availability of software in the emulation scene is also very revealing – there are more emulators for the Famicom/NES than perhaps any other console or computer. The continued recognition and legacy of the Famicom has caused developers to realise that older-style games are still profitable. Many companies have recently released compilations of their past hits, such as Capcom's Mega Man collection and Hudson's remakes of Adventure Island and StarSoldier. And let's not forget the three sets of Famicom Mini games released for the GBA.

The Famicom's impact on console gaming is therefore obvious. Without it and the many developers who began painting their visions and dreams using it, we would have no Metroid or Zelda, no Mario or his rival Sonic, and Final Fantasy would be little more than a twinkling in Yoshitaka Amano's eye.



The original hardwired control pads. Controller II featured a built-in microphone and volume control

›Pocket pleasure

To commemorate the end of Famicom production, Nintendo released a special-edition Famicom-themed gold and burgundy GBA SP in very limited quantities (it was not meant for general sale). It also mass-produced another special-edition SP in the style of the Famicom AV for the masses, and then a later one based on the NES for the Western market. To coincide with these, Nintendo converted and re-released the best Famicom titles as the GBA Famicom Mini series. There were three sets released consisting of 10 games each, with the final set dedicated exclusively to the FDS – the were even produced on yellow cartridges that mimicked the old disks. Despite being relatively pricey (ranging from US$20 to US$30) for what are basically 20-year-old games, for the ardent collector nothing less than the full boxed set will suffice.



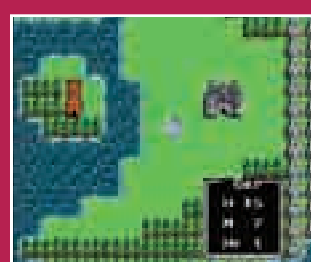


12 of the Famicom Mini games were released in the West to make up the NES Classics range. Here are both versions of the Metroid re-release

FAMICOM FAVOURITES

So which Famicom games did the Japanese public vote as their favourite in the *Famitsu* poll? Here are the top 40 titles...

1	Dragon Quest 3
2	Super Mario Bros.
3	Super Mario Bros. 3
4	Final Fantasy 3
5	Dragon Quest 4
6	Dragon Quest 2
7	Dragon Quest
8	Legend of Zelda
9	Mother
10	Mario Bros.
11	Final Fantasy
12	Kirby
13	Kunio in Feudal Japan
14	Kunio Sports
15	Spartan X
16	Super Mario Bros. 2
17	Kunio Dodgeball
18	Final Fantasy 2
19	Fire Emblem
20	Sanma no Meitantei
21	Xevious
22	Ice Climber
23	Spelunker
24	Castlevania
25	Gradius
26	Goonies
27	Captain Tsubasa
28	Konami Wai Wai World
29	Metroid
30	Takeshi no Chousenjou
31	Final Fantasy 1 + 2
32	Portpia Renzoku Satsujin Jiken
33	Nekketsu Kouha Kunio Kun
34	Bomberman
35	Ganbare Goemon
36	Wizardry
37	Donkey Kong
38	Hokkaidou Rensa Satsujin
39	Pro Yakkyu Family Stadium
40	Twinbee

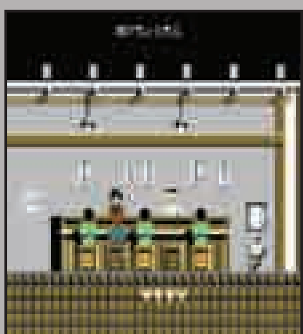


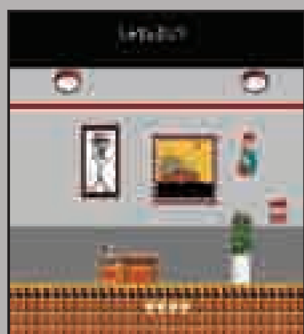
Leapfrogging Mario to the top of the poll, Enix Corporation's Dragon Quest 3

Over 1,200 titles were released, so trying to whittle it down to 10 of the best would be an unenviable task and some readers would no doubt be outraged that their favourite title had been left out. Instead, we're going to list what we consider to be the 10 unsung greats, since virtually everyone knows the classics such as Mario, Zelda, Contra and Final Fantasy. Number order is not important – what is important is gamers can discover some of the gems that are out there

Takeshi no Chousenjou

The worst game ever designed or a twisted work of genius? Takeshi no Chousenjou was the first and only game that film director Takeshi 'Beat' Kitano ever created. Despite the fact that the player has to perform near-impossible tasks such as singing karaoke (leaving the control pad untouched for an hour) and hitting an enemy 20,000 times to kill it, the Japanese public still voted it into the top 50 Famicom games of all time. Designed with the intention of breaking as many gaming rules as possible and by someone who claims to hate videogames, it's an example of the experimental design techniques that no longer exist in today's climate of risk aversion.

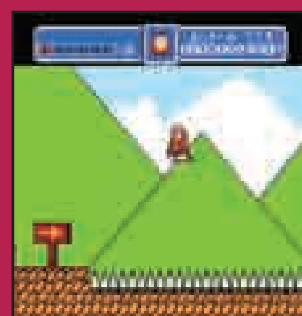




Utsurun desu kawauso Hawaii e iku

Another game that tries to break away from convention, Utsurun has its own take on the platforming genre. When booted up it reveals two fake title screens, and later in the game the player is forced to take a blind leap of faith into a pit of spikes, only to realise that the background forms a bridge of safety. Enemies are also attacked in an unusual way – to activate the variety of moves available, the attack button has to be held down for varying lengths of time as the game cycles through each one, with the most powerful only available for a short time. But that's nothing compared to the characters, the main one of which seems to be a middle-aged man in a rubber otter suit. There are many other bizarre elements found within, all of which are wrapped in the kind of surrealism only the Japanese can get away with.

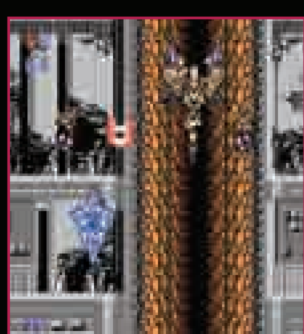




Crisis Force

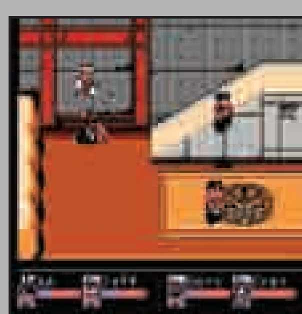
Old-fashioned shoot-em-up gaming from the people who brought you Parodius and Twinbee. This is another title that regularly reaches the higher echelons of the Famicom shooter charts. Smooth parallax scrolling and luscious graphics, coupled with a typically excellent Konami soundtrack, set this apart from many of the other Famicom games in this genre. As is standard for a good shooter, there is a suitably impressive weapons power-up system – based around your craft being able to transform into one of three attack configurations at the press of a button – and, of course, there's the screen-filling power bomb. Crisis Force is incredibly fast paced and is all about raising weapon power to ridiculous levels, so that single shots can take out fleets of enemies.

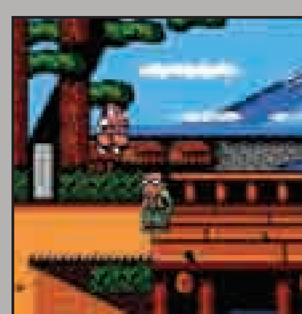




Kunio Kun series

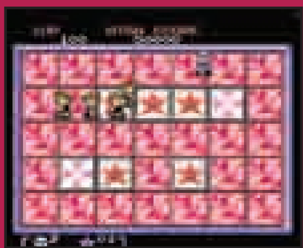
One of the best things to come out of Technos was its Kunio series of games. These games involved everything from sports to high-school gang brawls, and all of them featured super-deformed character designs that would become synonymous with Technos games. Some of the titles from the series went on to be localised and released abroad as River City Ransom titles, but many greats, such as Jidaigeki dayo Zenin Shuugou (pictured), were exclusive to Japan. Sport aside, Kunio games took the form of stats-based brawlers and were a joy to play. Featuring large characters, outrageous special moves, and detailed scenery which could be used as weapons, it was the definitive beat-em-up series. Later games even supported simultaneous four-player fights, making it an unrivalled series of fighters on the Famicom.

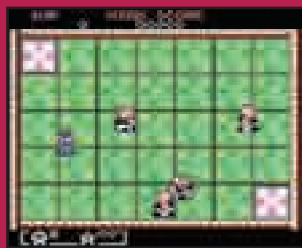




Quinty

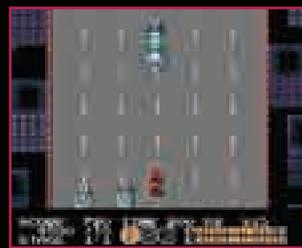
This isn't a Japan-only title as it was released in the West under the moniker Mendel Palace, but it's of such a high quality it deserves a mention. Quinty was the very first game designed by Pokémon creator Satoshi Tajiri. The game's packed with small details and delicate character animation, and the aesthetics can still impress. Gameplay, meanwhile, is deceptively simple and drags you in – you're soon kicking cards around to collect bonus items and trying to splat enemies against the walls. To call it an action-based puzzle game would be a *very* loose description as there's nothing else quite like it.





Gun-Dec

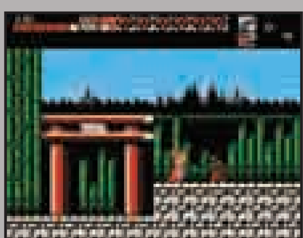
Released in the West under the title Vice: Project Doom, this excellent Ninja Gaiden clone just has to be included. With amazing cutscenes and flawlessly crafted gameplay, this is a title that actually surpasses the game that inspired it. Gameplay is kept fresh throughout via a combination of side-scrolling action, driving and Operation Wolf-style shooting sections, all of which create one perfectly formed package. Those who manage to complete it also get to enjoy the grand conclusion to this surprisingly dark plot filled with red herrings.

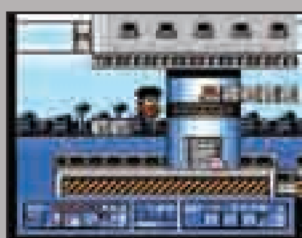




Konami Wai Wai World

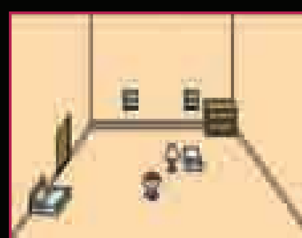
Everyone loves character compilation games and almost everyone loves Konami game characters, so it's strange that while Japan was blessed *twice* with the Wai Wai games, neither title made it to the West. The game is a send-up of everything you love about Konami. Featuring a selection of well-known characters, such as Simon Belmont, Goemon and even Twinbee, the game also throws a number of new ones into the mix. Each of the many stages is themed around an entire game from Konami's much-loved back catalogue and the production values are extremely high, especially in the second title of the series.

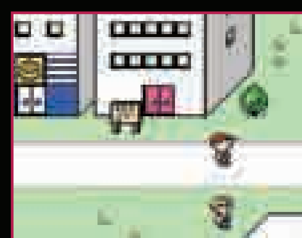




Mother

Released exclusively for the Famicom, this is a fine example of why games should be regarded as modern art. Written by the legendary Shigesato Itoi, it's set in the present day and includes many emotional themes running throughout. Though an RPG by nature, it avoids many modern clichés such as levelling and gold hunting, instead replacing them with growing up and gaining a regular allowance from a father who's never at home. It would be a severe injustice to try to describe the sum of parts that is the Mother series. The only way to fully understand it is to persevere with the game until the grand finale.





Huang Di

Possibly the greatest game to come out of China during the Famicom era, Huang Di is as enjoyable to play as it is difficult to track down. An unlicensed bootleg-only cartridge, the game was released in limited quantities. Though it can be tentatively described as a platform action game, it's innovative in that it allows the player limitless flight and spell casting. Huang Di also contains some truly breathtaking levels, bosses, set pieces and cutscenes. Flying over a village of headless warriors, traversing a fungi jungle and battling a wildcat under the cover of moonlight are just some of the gaming treats players will never forget.

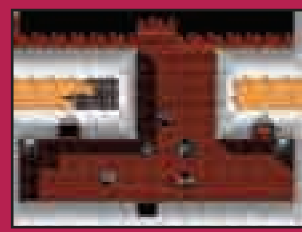




Sweet Home

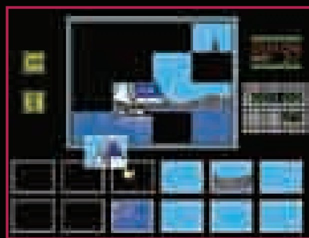
Combine the gameplay mechanics of Final Fantasy with the original Biohazard/Resident Evil house scenario and improve it by incorporating an innovative 'team' system, then integrate a truly disturbing plot about a deranged female artist who has been kidnapping and burning local children alive, and you've got Sweet Home. Made by Capcom and bearing more than a striking resemblance to the aforementioned PlayStation/Saturn hit, it's a thrilling game from beginning to end, particularly the fan translation. One of the many great RPGs that were never localised, Sweet Home is now highly sought after.





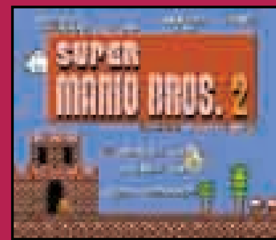
Compiling a rundown of the best Famicom Disk System games is difficult since the majority of its triple-A titles are available on cartridge in the West. There are several FDS-only games that deserve special mention though

Kineko: The Monitor Puzzle



A sedate and very relaxing puzzler containing what is arguably the closest thing to FMV during that era. The player is presented with a short looping film that's been divided up into tiles – their task is to reassemble them in the correct pattern. Technically speaking, it's nothing short of brilliant for something produced on such antiquated technology. Each of the separate squares continues to play their individual section of film as they're manipulated, so sharp eyes are needed to see where edges connect. Time attack, multiple difficulties and a variety of very different films make for a well-rounded puzzle game.

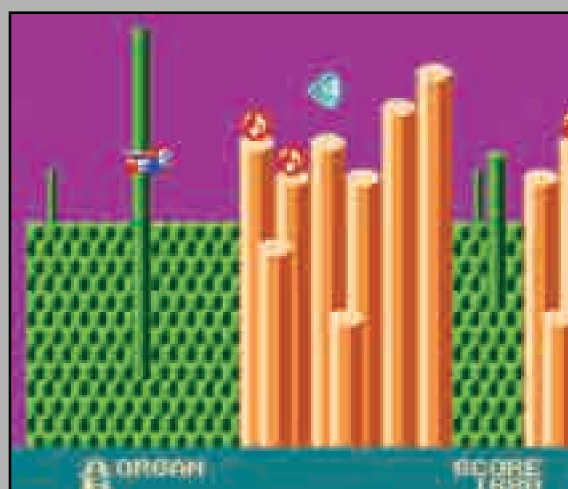
Super Mario Bros. 2





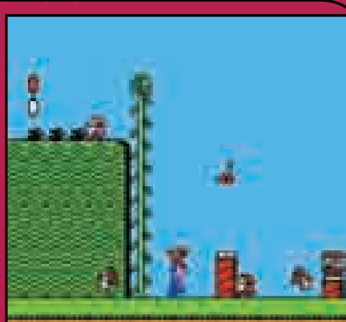
Commonly known as the Lost Levels thanks to the SNES Mario All-Stars compilation, this is the true sequel to the original Super Mario Bros. Though there are a few new additions, such as poisonous mushrooms and a graphics overhaul, the gameplay is nearly identical to that of its predecessor, proving to be as fluid and playable as ever. Officially this is only available on the FDS, but in the early 90s hackers managed to convert it to cartridge then mass produced it – these are now highly sought after.

Otocky



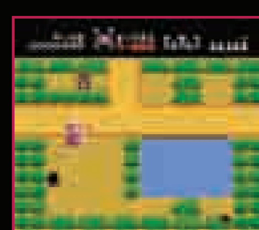
This is a highly ambitious game that has been described as an attempt to combine videogames with organic composition. The game takes the form of side-scrolling shooter in which the main weapon is a music ball (with its size representing the player's physical energy) that can be fired in eight directions, producing a different musical note for each one. The musical theme runs throughout – one of the power-ups is a tempo increase that speeds up on-screen action, and a plethora of others change the sound of the main weapon (there's a total of 16 unique sounds). Unlike other shooters, the goal is not to survive until a boss is reached but rather to collect musical energy. Once enough has been collected, the player is transported to a massive musical note filled with holes, the goal being to shoot the energy into the holes to repair it. This makes for a very distinctive experience, since it affects how you approach the game, focusing less on destroying enemies and more on collecting the notes. Alongside the main game is a Free mode, in which the levels are devoid of enemies, and a Freestyle Music mode, where players can create their own veritable symphony.

Doki Doki Panic



As well as the official sequel to SMB, the FDS also played host to the unofficial sequel. Knowing a good thing when it saw one, Nintendo bought all the rights to the game (something Fuji TV no doubt still regrets, having witnessed the recent money-making re-releases of the old franchise) and then repackaged it as SMB2 for the Western market by replacing the four main characters with Mario and friends (this was later re-released in Japan on cartridge as Super Mario USA). Despite the fact that Nintendo was seemingly keen to ignore the origins of the title, this is still the same enjoyable game albeit with unaltered sprites and gameplay.

Nazo no Murasamejou



This Zelda-style overhead adventure, released only two months after the Hyrulian epic, is often ignored in favour of Miyamoto's aforementioned masterpiece. This is unfair because despite being a smaller, more linear (and therefore, easier) game, the overall quality is on a par with the well-known Zelda title. The game is set in feudal Japan and features shuriken-throwing ninjas and authentic-sounding Eastern music. The player is also able to cast magic and deflect projectiles with his sword, like a true samurai master. And that's what makes this game such a joy for Western players – it adheres to the assumed stereotypes of ancient Japan, giving them exactly what they'd expect and want to see, and making it the perfect balance against Zelda's more medieval-themed setting.

eMag

KING MARIO



How Nintendo Conquered America

Continuing our Nintendo coverage, Alicia Ashby and Geson Hatchett look at the incredible impact of the NES in America, revealing the skilful marketing, ruthless domination of third-party developers and distinctly shady business practices that saw Nintendo take total control of the US videogame market

If you've ever spoken with an American gamer who was born around the late 70s, you've probably observed that person waxing nostalgic about the Nintendo Entertainment System and its games. Although there were PC games, arcades, and other home consoles available in the 1980s, none of them inspire the intense nostalgia with twenty-something Americans the Nintendo name does. If you were a child during that period, there simply were no other videogames to match Nintendo; there was even a brief period where playing any videogame, regardless of platform, would be referred to as "playing Nintendo".

Part of this fixation is simple nostalgia, but there's a deeper significance to it as well. Children of the 80s who love Nintendo do so because they were carefully trained to, through a program of relentless multimedia marketing. Nintendo was also careful to make sure that no competitor could ever present a serious threat to its control of the industry, by locking top software developers in iron-clad exclusivity contracts and resorting to a wide variety of deceptive sales tactics. Since low-cost computers never really took off with middle-class Americans, the NES usually ended up being the only videogame system most children could experience.

For a generation, Nintendo completely conquered the hearts and minds of American gamers. How it did so is still the stuff of legend, poorly understood even by the gamers who emerged from that country and that generation. However, delving into the history of the American gaming industry and the memories of the 'Nintendo generation' does much to reveal how King Mario got his crown.

Playing with power

The home videogame industry was born with the introduction of the Magnavox Odyssey in 1971, though it was the release of Atari's VCS console in 1977 that really sparked a nationwide videogame craze. Within a few years rivals including Coleco and Mattel developed competing consoles, and by 1983, the entire American videogame market was clocking up yearly sales of US$3.2 billion.

As most gamers know, this peak was followed by a horrible crash. Atari began flooding the market with new game cartridges in 1982, and many gamers and retailers complained the glut was resulting in lots of poorly made games. Demand sharply contracted, and suddenly retailers were left with huge inventories of videogames that could not be shifted. Companies folded, retailers and investors lost gigantic sums of money, and the American media was quick to pronounce the entire videogame 'fad' completely dead. By 1985, yearly sales had shrunk to an abysmal US$100 million.

Japan, however, suffered no such massive market contraction. Since Atari's releases there were managed by Japanese companies acting as middlemen, the oversupply of cartridges never happened. It was in this friendlier environment that a toy company called Nintendo began to market a product called the Famicom. A true 8-bit system, the Famicom delivered faster and more visually appealing games than any of the consoles that competed with Atari's VCS; only the ColecoVision came close. Nintendo was able to quickly saturate the Japanese market with its products, and had to look toward foreign markets to keep growing.

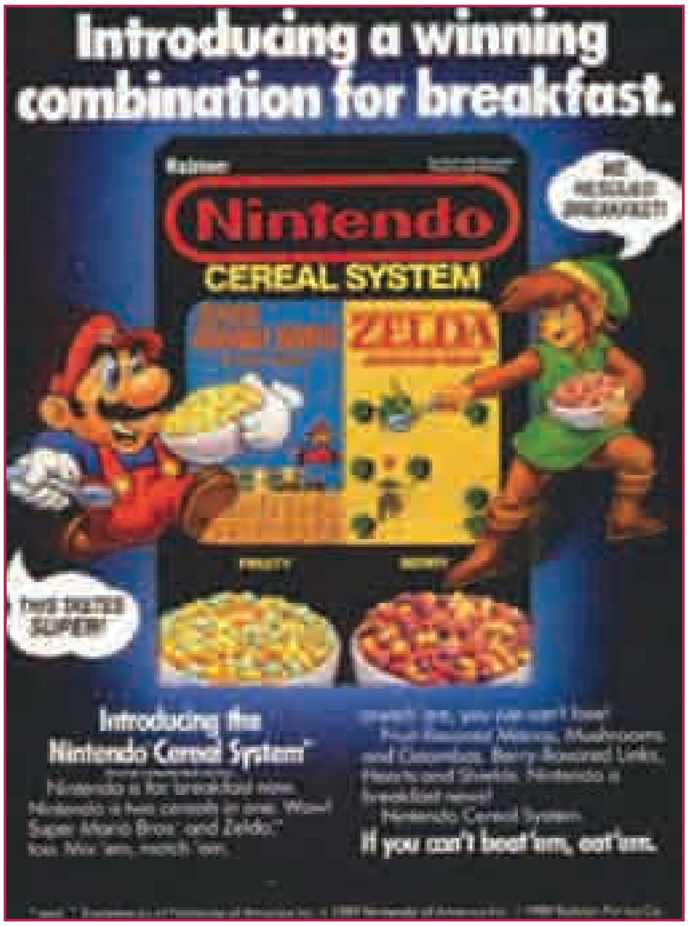
The logical next market for the Famicom was America. Nintendo's Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Junior arcade games had turned immense profits there despite the diminishing market, earning US$200 million in sales and US$55 million in marketing revenues in 1982 alone. The secret of Nintendo's arcade success over larger competitors like Atari and Bally was to only release a few high-quality titles in a given year, when standard industry practice was to release as many as 20. It



Arriving in 1986, as Atari shifted its focus to the 16-bit home computer market, the NES had a clear run in the US console market



Thanks to the success of its Donkey Kong arcade games, Nintendo was confident of conquering the US home videogame market



Last month, an unopened box of Nintendo Cereal System dating from 1988 fetched US$129 on eBay US. We wonder if it was still crunchy

stood to reason that if Nintendo approached making games for an American version of the Famicom in the same way, ensuring quality over quantity, it would be a trend-bucking success.

In order to help the American market accept the product, Nintendo felt it should redesign it to make it seem less like one of the old home videogame consoles, and more like some kind of space-age gadget. So Nintendo launched the console alongside a cool-looking but basically useless robot addition called R.O.B. (Robotic Operating Buddy) as a peripheral for its new system, along with a redesigned American version of Nintendo's popular Beam Gun toy called the Zapper. The planned 'Nintendo Advanced Video System' name was altered to 'Nintendo Entertainment System', and the cartridges renamed 'game paks'.

Introduced into toy stores nationwide in 1986, the NES quickly became a rampaging success with children – and more than a few adults – across America. By the end of spring 1987, American retail chains like Walmart and Circuit City were scrambling to expand their commitment to the Nintendo line of products. Sales rose to over US$1 billion and the NES was named the top toy of 1987, with other toy makers complaining that Nintendo's success was coming at the expense of their own offerings. By 1988, sales had climbed to US$2.3 billion and Nintendo's products accounted for over 75% of all videogame sales in the US.

Third-party software developers lined up to exploit the console's success, but they often found working with Nintendo difficult and frustrating. Nintendo controlled manufacture of the custom NES game paks, and charged hefty fees per cartridge. This control of the manufacturing side also let Nintendo dictate how many units of a particular title were made, as well as how many new games a company could release in a year. Games released for the NES had to be exclusive, and couldn't be ported to other system for five years. Most devious of all, the NES was equipped with a patented lockout chip that would only play officially made Nintendo game paks. While large American companies and Japanese firms could tolerate the Nintendo constraints, smaller American software firms were basically locked out. If you didn't have the money to make games Nintendo's way, you simply couldn't make games for the NES.

As Nintendo reached the peak of its influence over the American videogame industry, a NES was present in 17% of all American households. The American market was performing so strongly that the parent company in Kyoto was able to post record profits and give shareholders 100% dividends. Licensees swallowed their pride and dealt with Nintendo's rigorous licensing requirements, since demand for the Nintendo brand was too strong to make competition viable. Nintendo of America's Peter Main was declared Marketer of the Year by *Adweek*, and rightfully so. The advertising programs he helmed through the 80s created an insatiable hunger for Nintendo-branded products in young American NES owners. A big part of that marketing program was multimedia licensing.

Nintendo generation

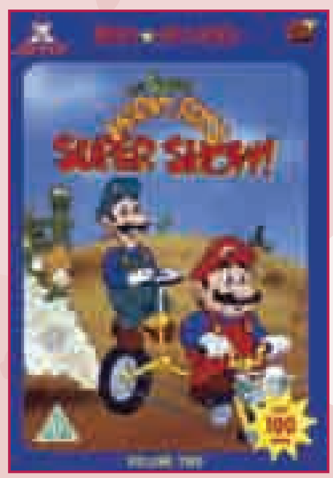
For the generation of children who owned an NES in 1989, you did not merely play Nintendo. You ate, slept, and breathed Nintendo. The passion for the system and the characters was all-consuming, and soon expanded far beyond a simple desire for NES games. If it sounds a bit like a frightening obsession, well… it could be.

The first licensed product that signalled the enormity of the Nintendo craze was, of all things, a licensed breakfast cereal. In the American market, and particularly during the 1980s, only the most wildly popular franchises were pursued for cereal licenses, creating products like the Flintstones-themed Fruity Pebbles. Before Ralston-Purina's Nintendo Cereal System in 1989, no piece of videogame hardware had been popular enough to earn the distinction.

The Nintendo Cereal System featured two cereals based on its top games: Super Mario Bros. and The Legend of Zelda. According to the box, the Zelda cereal was berry-flavoured, while the Mario cereal was fruit-flavoured (mushroom-flavoured cereal obviously didn't meet the taste testers' approval). The prominent use of screenshots on the box conveyed the notion that it was just like playing your favourite Nintendo games… only in a bowlful of milk.

Another defining sign of the Nintendo craze's magnitude was the production of a series of animated cartoons. These were immense hits, among the most popular animated productions on TV when initially released. The first was the Super Mario Bros. Super Show, which debuted in 1989 and divided itself between cartoon shorts and live-action bumper segments. For the cartoons, Mario and Luigi were portrayed as pasta-gulping plumbers. Along with a red-headed redesign of Princess Toadstool and her loyal mushroom retainer Toad, the heroic duo foiled King Koopa's evil plots. Usually he was out to conquer something, but whether it was the Mushroom Kingdom or the world varied from episode to



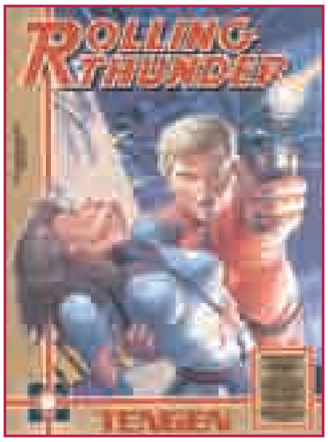


Episodes of Super Show were later released on videotape, and more recently, DVD

episode. Every Friday, the Mario cartoons were set aside to instead run cartoons based on The Legend of Zelda. The animated series was a sort of ultra-sarcastic take on the classic swords-and-sorcery game, with Ganon up to typical cartoon villainy in every episode.

The live-action bumper segments that padded the cartoons were something like a miniature Nintendo sitcom, complete with canned laughter. The stories, such as they were, focused on the Mario Brothers' misadventures as plumbers in Brooklyn. In this version, Mario and Luigi were (respectively) played by former World Wrestling Federation manager 'Captain' Lou Albano and an ageing character actor named Danny Wells. At the end of the show, the live-action Mario would encourage watchers to do 'The Mario', a bizarre dance set to the Super Show's equally strange theme song.

The Super Show was overwhelmingly popular in syndication, and prompted the creation of a Saturday morning incarnation that ditched the live-action segments. This cartoon was called The Adventures of Super Mario Bros. 3, and used the then red-hot new game as its basis. It was essentially identical to the Super Show's Mario cartoons, but added the newly renamed King 'Bowser' Koopa's seven children to the cast. The children were supposedly modelled on the ones who served as level bosses in the game, but each had personalities

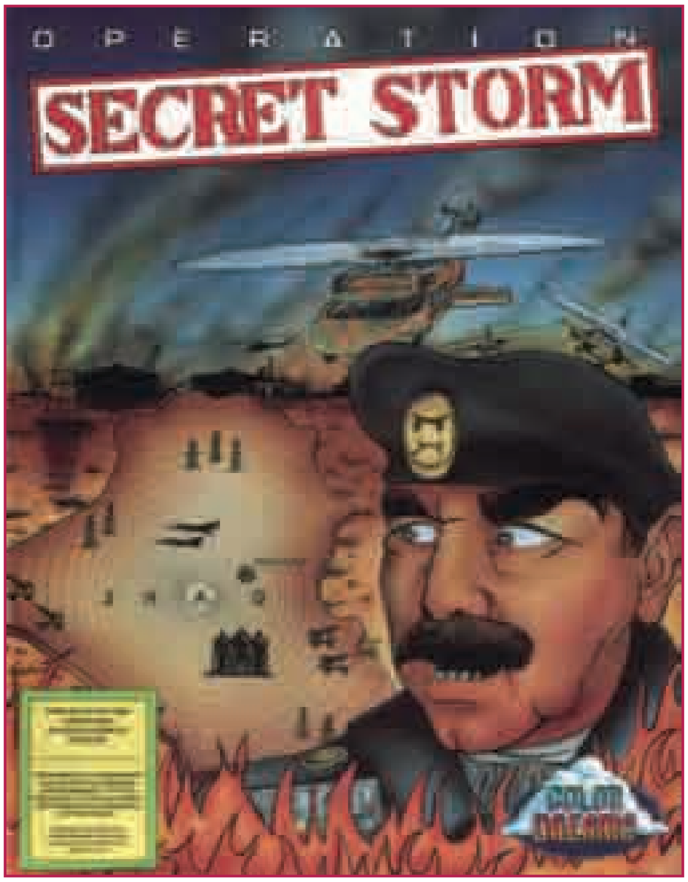


and nicknames that the show's writers seem to have fabricated out of whole cloth. For instance, Wendy O was referred to as Cootie Pie Koopa, and Morton Koopa Jr was dubbed Big Mouth Koopa. The mania for Super Mario Bros. 3 at the time was immense, and the cartoon was yet another Nintendo smash hit.

When Mario stumbled

From 1990 onwards, Nintendo's success in both America and Japan began to slowly diminish. In some respects this was inevitable; keeping up such a monstrous market share would have been difficult even under the best of conditions. While Nintendo had been focusing on bombarding American children with licensed products, marketing conditions had begun to quietly worsen.

The most immediate problem was market saturation. Perhaps 30% of American homes had an NES as Nintendo entered the 90s,

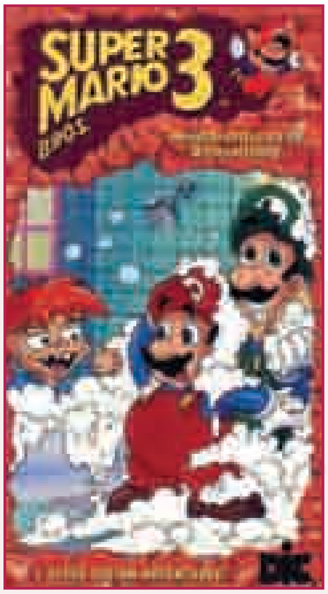


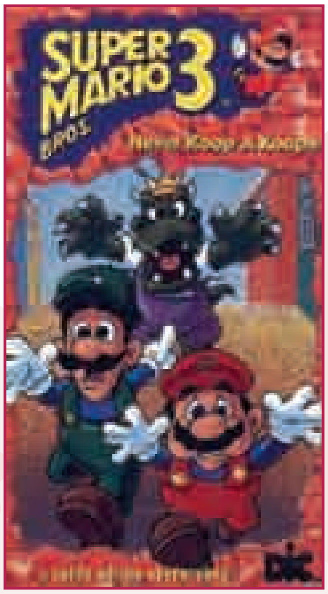
Tengen and Color Dreams were just two companies who released games without the coveted 'Nintendo Seal of Approval'

and the company was quick to realise it'd have to look outside of its core audience – children – to make new NES sales. Nintendo developed plans to try to market to adults in the US, and began to finally put some effort into promoting the NES in Canada and Europe. Sadly, these efforts failed to deliver the same success as the American release. Nintendo of Canada was poorly managed, while Nintendo of Europe had difficulty dealing with the multiplicity of nations it sold in. Adults everywhere perceived the NES as too much of a child's plaything to be taken seriously.

Another problem was the looming birth of the 16-bit era. Sega and NEC picked 1989 to rush out their 16-bit systems, but Nintendo felt no need to take these competitors seriously while the NES remained profitable. This was a correct instinct with NEC's TurboGrafx-16, but Nintendo made a terrible mistake by underestimating Sega's Genesis/Megadrive. Sega smartly countered Nintendo's marketing with its own campaigns, which addressed ageing NES owners who were beginning to find Nintendo's offerings too childish for their maturing tastes.

At the same time, Nintendo was deep in multiple lawsuits in the American courts. It was wrapped up in litigation with Atari Games Inc and its subsidiary Tengen over the home videogame rights to Tetris, with both parties suing each other and asking for injunctions to keep its rival from putting a version of the game on the market. Nintendo was also suing Blockbuster, alleging that its rental of NES game paks infringed upon Nintendo's copyrights. By the end of the year Nintendo had even managed to get into legal trouble with the US government, as the Chairman of the House of Representatives Antitrust committee, Dennis Eckart, accused the company of being an abusive, anti-American monopoly. The centrepiece of the accusations was the Nintendo licensing policies, and alleged policies of using intimidation tactics against retailers that dared to carry non-licensed Nintendo games. More legal action followed in 1990, with Nintendo suing Galoob for attempting to market the Game Genie device that let players enter codes to manipulate the gameplay rules in their NES games.





The short-lived Super Mario Brothers 3 animated series ran for just 26 episodes in 1990

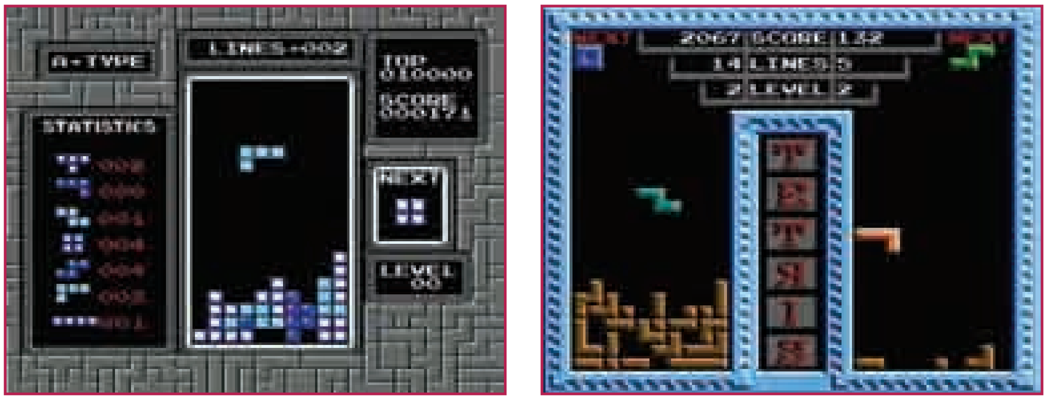
›Box Office Bros.

The Hollywood treatment of Super Mario Bros. that Nintendo had been working on ever since the Super Show's monstrous success was met with a crushingly lukewarm reception when it finally debuted in 1993.

The movie's critical flaw was that it radically re-interpreted the Mario storyline to allow for more human characters, and in the process created something that was nothing like the game. The few fans that went to see the film were confronted with a bizarre storyline about an alternative universe created by a meteor that crashed into the Earth millions of years ago, supposedly killing off the dinosaurs. The 'Mushroom Kingdom' was actually a twisted version of New York City run by sentient hyper-evolved dinosaurs. Toad was a hippie, Goombas were giant humanoids, and Bowser was a blatantly uninterested Dennis Hopper.



The core cast was shockingly recognisable in contrast, with Bob Hoskins and John Leguizamo doing surprisingly believable jobs as Mario and Luigi. The movie also featured a well-cast Daisy, but relied on some tortuous plot twists to get her into the Princess Toadstool role. Ultimately, young fans were confused and audiences stayed away. The film was considered a major flop, only recouping $US20 million of its estimated $US42 million budget, and a concrete sign that the value of the Nintendo name had diminished.



The Tetris court case resulted in two versions of the game available for the NES, one from Nintendo (left) and one from Tengen (right)

Nothing seemed to work out Nintendo's way in these legal conflicts. While Nintendo won the suit with Tengen, third-party developers used it as an excuse to publicly cry foul over Nintendo's licensing schemes. The simultaneous antitrust proceedings did nothing to improve Nintendo's rapidly tarnishing image, even though the outcome of the hearings was little more than a slap on the wrist (Nintendo had to send US$5-off coupons to all NES owners). The lawsuits with Blockbuster and Galoob, which Nintendo didn't win, made many gamers feel that Nintendo had become grasping and greedy. Talk of artificially inflated cartridge prices began to swirl along with increasingly exaggerated rumours about Nintendo's monopolistic practices.

As a result of all these factors, people began to grow fundamentally tired of, and in some cases hostile to the Nintendo brand name. The 16-bit Super NES received a relatively lukewarm reception in America, which had a withering effect on the Nintendo licensing machine. An attempt to update the Saturday morning Super Mario cartoon to include elements from the new Super Mario World game led to the cartoon's cancellation after a season. A cartoon that had been popular for so long suddenly seemed full of grating voices and painfully screwball antics.



Although the SNES was technically superior to the Megadrive, it came second in the 16-bit console race

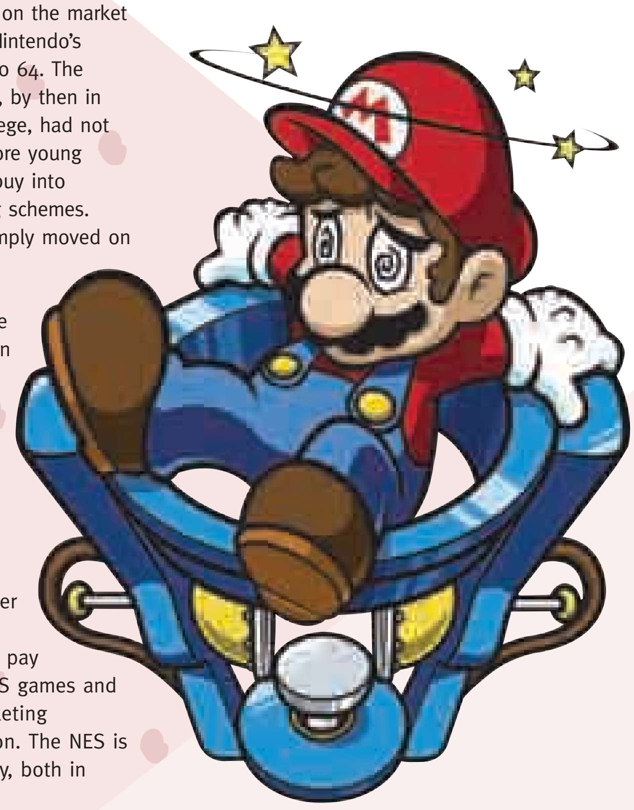
Fallen empire

In February 1992, a young Sony executive who would go on to be part of the electronics giant's videogame business wrote: "The industry is at a watershed. Nintendo's superiority is crumbling." The executive in question was Ken Kutaragi, creator of the PlayStation, and coming years would prove him painfully right.

The mid-90s saw the Megadrive edge ahead of the SNES in overall sales, while Sega's Sonic begin to eclipse Mario in popularity as a mascot. In the generation of consoles that followed, Sony's PlayStation debuted on the market to soundly trounce Nintendo's offering, the Nintendo 64. The Nintendo Generation, by then in high school and college, had not been replaced by more young gamers who would buy into Nintendo's marketing schemes. Instead, they had simply moved on to Sony's offerings.

Still, the shadow the NES casts on the mind of the American gamer is long. The Nintendo Generation is pushing 30 by now, but still you'll find many who fondly remember the Nintendo Cereal System and the Super Mario Bros. Super Show. Websites that pay homage to great NES games and Nintendo's old marketing schemes are common. The NES is even still sold widely, both in second-hand gaming stores and flea markets. Despite the proliferation of NES ROMs and emulators, the actual hardware is still prized for delivering a superior gameplay experience.

King Mario may have used litigation, ruthless marketing, and oppressive licensing to his advantage, but he also won his kingdom by providing the greatest videogames that Americans had ever seen. Many American retro gamers would argue that the sheer quality and vitality of the NES and its game library haven't been matched by any console since. It's unlikely that a Nintendo console will ever dominate the American market in the same way, but the NES and all the hype that went with it will be remembered fondly for as long as the Nintendo generation endures.




Now You're Playing With Power.
SUPER MARIO BROS.
METROID
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
KID ICARUS
THE ADVENTURE OF LINK
DONKEY KONG JR. MATH
EXCITEBIKE
WRECKING CREW
MACH RIDER
GYROMITE
STACK-UP
ICE CLIMBER
KUNG FU
BALLOON FIGHT
URBAN CHAMPION
PINBALL
CLU CLU LAND
DONKEY KONG JR.
DONKEY KONG
POPEYE
MARIO BROS.
DONKEY KONG 3
10-YARD FIGHT
TENNIS
BASEBALL
SOCCER
GOLF
VOLLEYBALL
PRO WRESTLING
SLALOM
PUNCH-OUT!!
GUMSHOE
DUCK HUNT
WILD GUNMAN
HOGAN'S ALLEY
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

Next Level Gaming: AMSTRAD CPC-6128

Twenty years ago, Amstrad released the CPC664, successor to the popular 464 model. But after just six months on sale, Sir Alan Sugar presumably called the 664 into his boardroom, stabbed a finger in its direction and declared "You're fired!" Its replacement was the CPC6128, a computer with double the amount of RAM. And this extra memory surely opened the door to bigger and better games...

The 6128 was launched in August 1985, and, as with the earlier models, was available with either a monochrome or colour monitor. Besides the memory boost, the core CPC components remained the same – a trusty old Z80 processor running at 4MHz, three-channel sound and a palette of 27 colours (16 of which could be displayed simultaneously on screen in the lowest of the three resolution modes).

Other changes were purely cosmetic. Most noticeably, the famous coloured keys were dropped, giving the computer a more professional look. In fact, adverts were created showing the 464 and the 6128 side by side, with the older machine running an arcade game and the spanking new model displaying a 3D graph. It was obvious that the 6128 was Amstrad's more 'serious' computer, and it even came bundled with a new version of CP/M (v.3.0) that utilised the machine's extra memory and opened the door to even more application software. But for CPC gamers, the additional 64KB of RAM wasn't intended for word processors, spreadsheets and databases. No, it was purely for games – bigger and better games that would blow the 8-bit competition away. Well, that was the hope anyway.



Having replaced the 664, the 6128 was advertised as Amstrad's 'serious' alternative to the 464

With the introduction of the 664 and its built-in 3in disk drive, many games were now appearing on floppy disk. This negated the need for troublesome tapes, ensuring that software could be loaded quickly and easily. The 6128 was fully backwards compatible with the earlier models, so owners of the new machine immediately had access to a growing catalogue of disk-based software. It took a little while longer for dedicated 6128 software to appear, and even then it was more of a trickle than a flood.

It's alive!

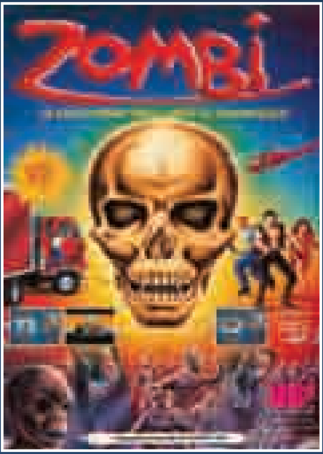
The CPC range was extremely popular in France, so it was hardly surprising when the first 6128 game came courtesy of Ubisoft. Released in late 1986, Zombi was an arcade adventure based on the classic horror flick *Dawn of the Dead*, featuring a







The location graphics in the 128KB version of Zombi (right) feature much more detail



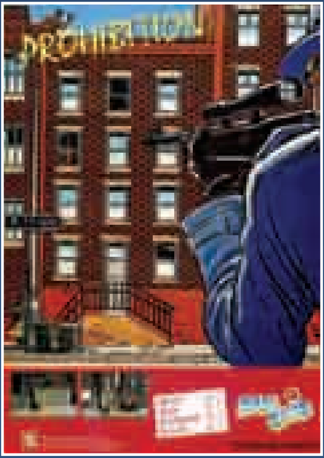
group of survivors, a gang of Hell's Angels and an army of zombies all fighting for control of a huge shopping mall. Much like the movie, there was a standard version and an extended edition, and the latter would only run on the 128KB CPC. Initial differences between the two versions were minor – the icon-driven interface had been tweaked for 6128 users, making it easier to select options – but as you began to explore, it became clear that the extended version was packed with extra detail. The location graphics in the stripped-down 64KB version were sparse by comparison.

The next game of note was Prohibition from Infogrammes, another French publisher. This shooting-gallery game saw you gunning down the enemy gangs of New York, a job that was far easier on the 6128 version as the action filled the screen. In the 64KB version the screen display was reduced by about 40%, making it more difficult to pinpoint enemies before they returned fire. The 128KB version also introduced a between-stages bonus section in which you actually entered the crime lord's den and shot him dead.

The 6128 had been on sale for 18 months and yet Zombi and Prohibition were the only games really worth shouting about. Meanwhile, on the Spectrum side of the fence, Spectrum 128 owners had been enjoying a steady flow of dedicated 128KB software. To make matters worse, Amstrad had earlier acquired Sinclair and its focus had shifted to the new Spectrum models. In particular, the new Spectrum +3 was almost a carbon copy of the 6128, with 128KB of RAM and a built-in 3in disk drive.

Amstrad may have overlooked the 6128, but thankfully third-party publishers weren't so eager to jump ship. In 1987, MicroProse released Sid Meier's Pirates!, a game of such scope and depth that it would only run on a CPC with 128KB of memory. Advertised as "The World's First Swashbuckling Simulation", the game offered much more than mere swordplay, blending action, adventure, strategy and role-playing into one highly memorable title. And the fact that it was a 128KB exclusive certainly gave 6128 owners that warm feeling they'd been craving for so long.

Sadly, the release of Pirates! didn't open the floodgates, but that trickle we spoke about earlier continued to seep through. Computer Scrabble Deluxe was also released in 1987. This 128KB version of the original had an expanded dictionary of 20,000 words and high-resolution graphics. Considerably less yawn-inducing were versions of Dragon Ninja and Chase HQ, both of which featured additional speech samples when loaded on a 128KB machine – who could forget the "Let's Go Mr Driver!" line from Chase HQ? On tape, both games also loaded in one go, so there was no painful loading between stages.





Prohibition on the 6128 featured a larger screen display, making it easier to target enemies in the allotted time

›Upgrade options

Amstrad's approach to home computers was undeniably smart. While the standard CPC464 model was provided as a complete all-in-one package, with built-in tape deck and bundled monitor, the computer was easily expandable. If you wanted to use disk software there was no need to upgrade to a 664 or a 6128 as the standalone DDI-1 drive was available. Similarly, if you wanted the extra memory of the 6128, you could purchase a 64KB RAM pack that slotted into the back of the 464. However, there was no way of upgrading the old CPC to run Plus software, but then again, this was perhaps no great loss.





The 6128 disk version of Stunt Car Racer came complete with an extra multiplayer mode

Expanding horizons

From 1990 onwards, the CPC fell more in line with the Spectrum market and the majority of games were released with the 6128 in mind. Some titles were designed to run exclusively on the expanded machine and these included Command (Rainbird), Wild Streets (Titus), Gremlins 2 (Elite), Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge (Gremlin), Midnight Resistance (Ocean), Iron Lord (Ubisoft), European Superleague (CDS), Space Crusade (Gremlin), Viz (Virgin), The Addams Family (Ocean) and Nigel Mansell's World Championship (Gremlin). Gremlin nearly canned the Nigel Mansell game, preferring to concentrate on the 16-bit market instead, only for Amstrad Action readers to swamp the publisher with letters demanding its release. It later appeared for the 6128, filling both sides of a 3in disk.

Other titles would run on all CPC machines but with enhancements if the extra memory was available. The 128KB version of Geoff Crammond's superb Stunt Car Racer featured a multiplayer mode and a 'hall of fame' gallery which were both stripped out of the standard 64KB game. International 3D Tennis on the 6128 introduced an extra 'season' mode and featured different music. Paperboy 2 also boasted additional in-game music, and it was the same story with Supercars which played an excellent techno-style tune throughout.

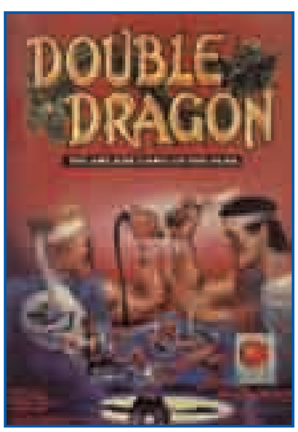
The final game worthy of mention was released in 1993 when the CPC market was on the wane. Zap T Balls by Elmar Kreiger (author of Super Cauldron and Prehistorik 2) was a colourful 128KB clone of Ocean's Pang. Pang was only available on cartridge for the CPC Plus machines, so Elmar effectively opened up the game to software-starved 6128 owners. Best of all, Zap T Balls looked as good as any Plus game, ensuring that one of the last commercial CPC games was also one of the most memorable.



Zap T Balls, one of the last great CPC games, was sold via an independent mail order company called Sentinel

›Double dutch

We covered the strange case of Double Dragon on the CPC back in issue 13, but in case you missed it, here's the mysterious story once again. Basically two completely different versions of the game were released – a dodgy port for standard 64KB CPCs and a superior conversion for 128KB machines – and both were developed by Binary Design. Anyway, the guys at Double Dragon Dojo did a little digging and it turns out that the 128KB version was converted from the ST and released for the French market. The 64KB version, meanwhile, was ported from the Spectrum and shovelled into UK shops. Like Big Boss Willie, the chief boss in Double Dragon, it was best avoided.



›Plus power

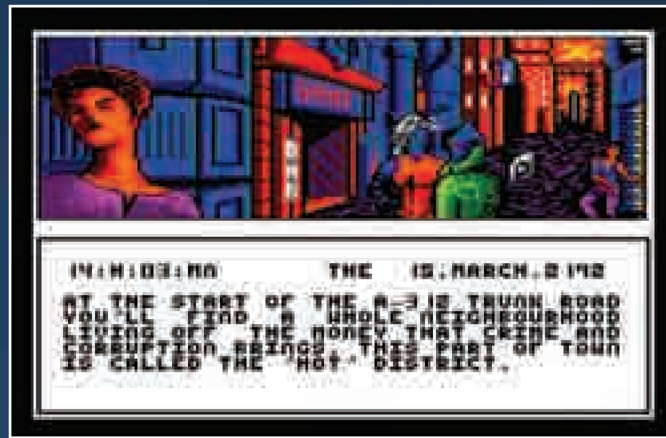
In 1990, Amstrad superseded the CPC line with the sleek new Plus range of machines. The 464 Plus and 6128 Plus computers were fully backwards compatible with the older models, although exclusive new hardware was introduced. Scrolling and sprites were now handled by the hardware, freeing up processor power, and there was an increased palette of 4,096 colours. Amstrad also released the GX4000, a flash-looking console with Plus capabilities.

Hundreds of enhanced Plus games were promised, but the resounding failure of the GX4000 (see *Retro Gamer* issue 11), killed the range stone dead. Still, a small number of exclusive Plus cartridges did creep out, including Burnin' Rubber (the bundled game), Robocop 2 and Pang, all of which were a cut above standard CPC fare. However, the majority of Plus games were lazy CPC ports with little or no enhancements. The main exception was Gremlin's Switch Blade, which was noticeably better when running on a Plus machine, on a par even with the 16-bit versions.



›Ubisoft's B.A.T.



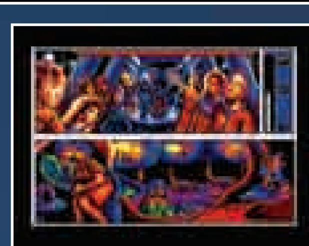


B.A.T. has to go down in history as one of the most under-appreciated games ever made, and to this day remains a title the majority of gamers have never heard of, let alone played. Originally appearing on the ST and Amiga, B.A.T. was an adventure far ahead of its time. It was surprising, then, when Ubisoft ported it to the 8-bit Amstrad in 1991, and even more so when it turned out to be an extremely faithful conversion. However, due to its depth and scope, it was only available on disk (filling both sides of two 3in floppies!).

As an agent for the Bureau of Astral Troubleshooting, you're sent to the planet Selenia to track down a rogue scientist by the name of Vrangor, who recently escaped from prison. All you have to go on is a hologram of Mergio, Vrangor's fellow escapee, and your own skills of investigation. It's up to you to explore the alien city, question its inhabitants, find leads to Vrangor's whereabouts and eventually bring him to justice.

B.A.T. is essentially an interactive graphic novel made up of several static locations. You can talk to various characters to gain information, and you must also learn to defend yourself as the city is a rough place. There's a whole host of mini-games in there too, including a bizarre disco-dancing challenge and a vehicular jaunt through the wastelands of the planet. You can buy items from shops, use vending machines, get your pockets picked, drink in a pub, visit a seedy porn cinema and more... All in a day's work for a space-cadet secret agent.

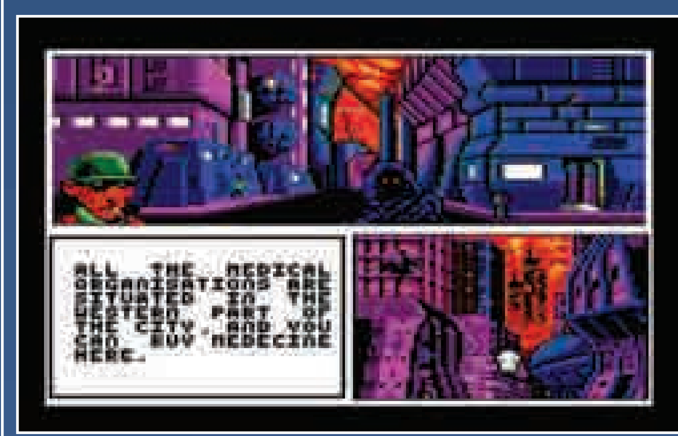
One of B.A.T.'s best features (and the most ahead of its time) is B.O.B., a computer grafted into your character's forearm. Using this you can monitor your status and health, keep track of your experiences, and switch between the two available translation modes (robot and alien). But far more interesting is the programming section in which you can actually come up with your own small programs, such as an auto translator, health warning

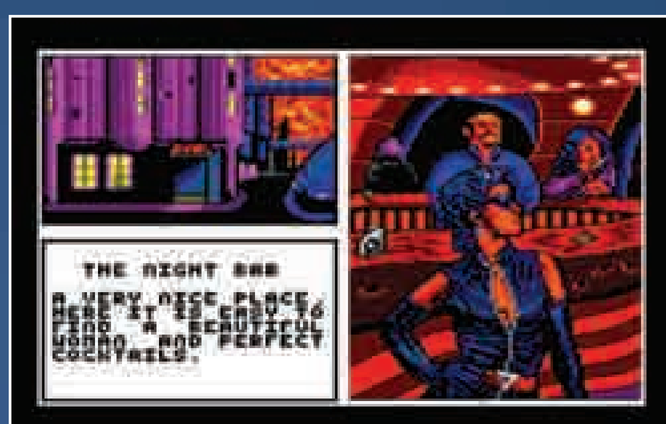


alarm or attack alert. It's very, very impressive.

Visually, the game lacks the detail and colour of the 16-bit versions, but every location is faithfully recreated, and it's hard to believe that the developer has managed to reproduce the game in this form. Sadly, the same can't be said for sound, as there isn't any... at all. Audio is completely absent from this port, so the adventure lacks atmosphere as you wander around in total silence.

But, aside from the lack of any sound, you can't help but be drawn into this intriguing adventure, and you certainly won't find anything else like this on the Amstrad. One for the disk drive owners to brag about.





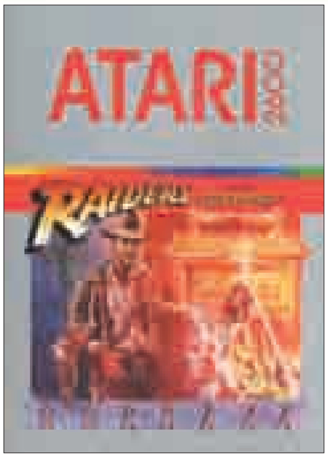
INDIANA JONES AND THE GAMING ARK



Since he first burst onto the screen in 1981's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the man with the whip and weather-beaten fedora has had a prolific tie with videogames. From simple text-based games to groundbreaking graphic adventures, Henry Jones Junior has seen and done it all on the majority of popular systems from the early 1980s onwards. As LucasArts begins work on a new title for next-gen consoles, and progress on the proposed fourth film gathers pace, Robert Mellor charts Indy's adventures in interactive entertainment

Raiders of the Lost Ark

Atari 2600, 1982



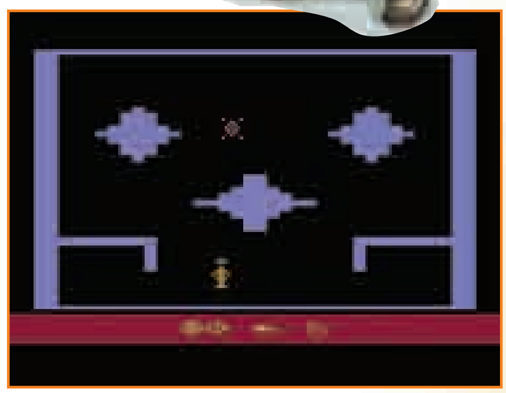


Indy's first official videogame outing appeared on Atari's well-established 2600 console and was released one year after the film. One of the earliest examples of a movie licence (hot on the heels of Parker Brothers' popular Empire Strikes Back videogame), the title was programmed by Atari legend Howard Scott Warshaw, the man also responsible for the mega-hit Yars' Revenge and the infamous E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial. Taking the most basic and generic elements of the film's plot, the game places adventurers into an overhead playing field, not dissimilar to that later seen in early RPG games, setting them off on a task to recover various treasures and evade a pesky baddy known only as 'The Thief'.

The title is a one-player game, uniquely using the first joystick to control Indy himself and the second to access the various items in the player's inventory. Graphics are rudimentary, as you'd expect, but serve their purpose well enough and are certainly colourful.

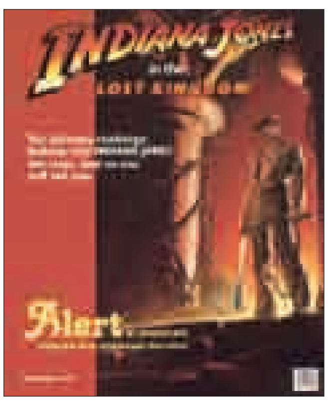
When shown the finished game, director Steven Spielberg's response was to say that he was expecting something more along the lines of Pac-Man. His attitude soon changed when Warshaw demonstrated a complete run-through of the title, however, after which Spielberg famously exclaimed, "It's just like a movie!" Well done Steve...





Indiana Jones in the Lost Kingdom

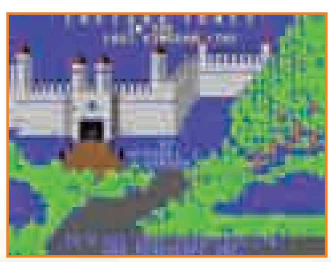
Commodore 64, 1984



Released by Mindscape, this title was the first Indiana Jones game to be based on an original concept rather than being an actual movie licence (despite using the *Temple of Doom* teaser poster as box art). The originality didn't stop there, though, with the documentation proudly proclaiming, "The ultimate challenge. Nobody told Indiana Jones the rules. And no one will tell you." This meant that the instruction manual included only annotated playing controls, without so much as a hint on how to complete the various challenges within the game.

Beginning with a faithful rendition of John William's famous *Raiders* theme, a text introduction brings players up to speed, informing them that Indy is deep within the undergrowth of a dense jungle, desperately searching for a sacred treasure that holds the key to a long-lost civilisation, with arch-rival Erik Peters not too far behind him. Stumbling across a mysterious castle not documented on any map, Dr Jones decides to venture inside in search of the artefact – nicely illustrated by the game with a brief graphical cutscene. A few options screens later, and it is completely down to the player to solve the devilish puzzles contained within each of the six playing areas, ranging from an oceanic scene plagued by giant vampire bats to a room full of deadly bouncing balls.

This promising game proves to be a mixed bag. Some of the scenes found within are highly enjoyable, such as the one in which Indy is pitted against a hideous green dragon. Others, in particular the cavernous landscape littered with bad guys, are deeply frustrating. The mysterious and unorthodox nature of the game works well to a point, but becomes somewhat ridiculous with the realisation that even the basic controls themselves change from room to room. Graphics are acceptable for the time, as is the sound, which features some especially piercing shrieks from the enemy characters. Play can prove sluggish and sticky, however, and the game's poor collision detection doesn't exactly help matters, making this a flawed but admirably unique and often endearing title.





Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom

Arcade, 1985

Manufactured by Atari on its System 1 hardware, this remains the only arcade outing for Indiana Jones to this day. This is surprising when you consider that it was a highly successful title that spawned equally popular home versions.

Like Atari's original Star Wars coin-op, the game is structured in a succession of waves. The player has to traverse the thuggee mines in a platform-and-ladders setting, take a thrilling isometric mine cart ride, and finally collect the first of three Sankara stones from the altar of Kali. Having done so, wave one is complete and the action continues until Indy has recovered all three of the stones. Another trip through the mines and a final mine cart chase take you to the rope bridge seen in the film's climax and the final showdown with evil Mola Ram himself.

In terms of both sound and graphics, Temple of Doom is superb for its time. The game's representation of the scenes in the movie is pleasingly accurate, while many facets of John William's wonderful score are recreated in all their glory, along with an impressive selection of sampled speech. Play is also a strong point, combining a varied mix of platform, maze, driving and action elements to create an extremely addictive experience. Presentation, meanwhile, is top-notch and features the option of either three or seven lives (depending on credits), a bonus round awarded for the game's completion and also the comparatively rare ability in an arcade game to actually choose one of three difficulty settings that also alter scenery and level dynamics accordingly.





Home conversions naturally followed and were handled by software giant US Gold in 1987. Sadly, despite the relatively simplistic nature of the original, none of them turned out to be of any real merit. The 8-bit versions released for the Commodore 64, Amstrad CPC and Spectrum were burdened with sluggish play and horrific multi-load, while the Atari ST port seemingly vanished from sight soon after release, never turning up on the Kixx budget label as its 8-bit cousins did.



Despite not appearing on UK shores, an Amiga port was later released in America by Mindscape. Like a lot of US-based software, it failed to take full advantage of the Amiga's hardware capabilities which, on top of arduous gameplay similar to the other home versions, meant it fared little better than US Gold's efforts.



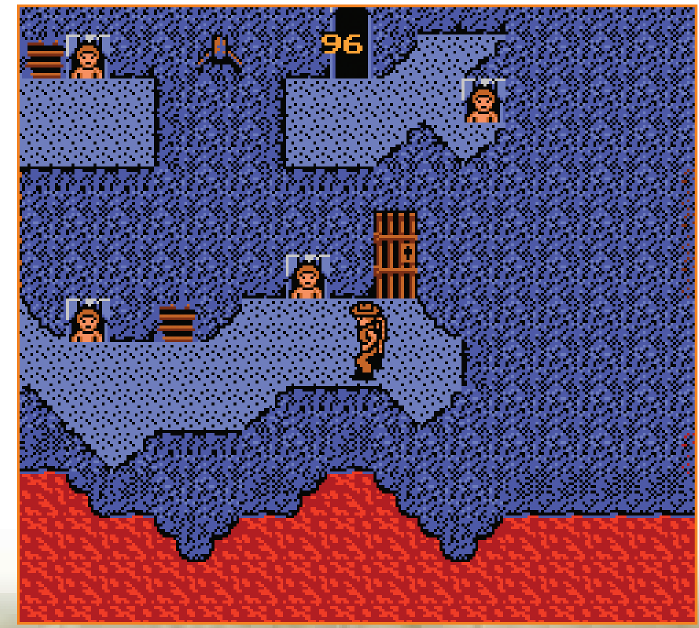
Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom

NES, 1988



Something of an oddity and a constant source of headaches for collectors, this title was actually released twice in 1988 by two separate publishers – once by Tengen and again by Mindscape. The rarer of the two proved to be Tengen's edition, as it was actually an unlicensed release without the obligatory Nintendo Seal Of Approval emblazoned on the box and cartridge. This version was subsequently withdrawn after legal action from Nintendo, making it a very cherished item for NES and Indy fans alike. Mindscape's version, on the other hand, was officially licensed but, apart from its differing box art, proved to be exactly the same game as the Tengen release.

Naturally based on the film of the same name, the game also has a tenuous link with Atari's coin-op, despite not being a direct conversion. The slave mines and mine cart chase sequences both feature, much like the arcade game, but the altar of Kali scene does not appear until close to the game's end, with the initial two sequences just looping for what seems like an eternity. Several new elements not featured in Atari's game are thrown into the mix, though, such as a selection of alternative weapons featuring knives, guns and even dynamite. A jump action is also added to the title, but this ends up making gameplay infinitely more infuriating because of the way Indy jumps downwards by default, leading to many a clumsy tumble into rivers of molten lava. This is not a patch on the arcade game, with problematic play, gaudy graphics, basic sound and laborious level design. It's seemingly endless too…



Indiana Jones and the Revenge of the Ancients

PC, 1987

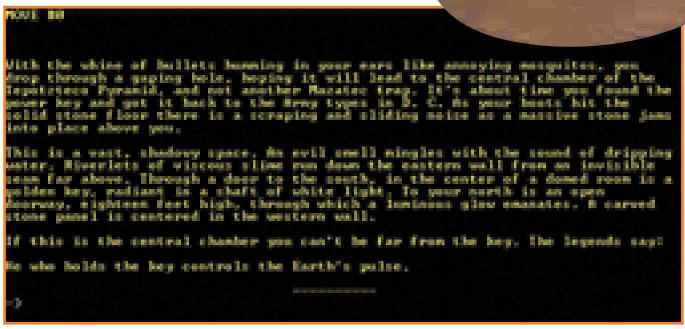


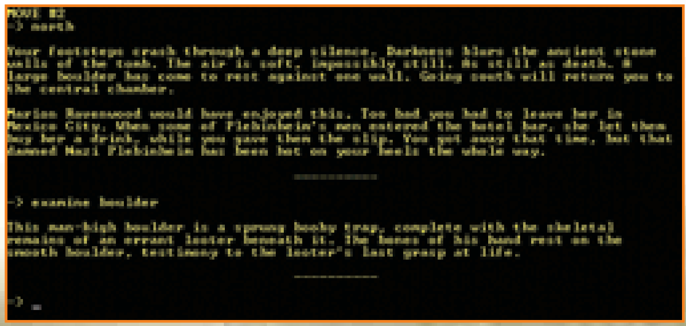
A text adventure released by Angelsoft and Mindscape in 1987, Revenge of the Ancients sees Indy embarking on a quest to track down a 'power key' with the ability to control the Earth's pulse. It's no great surprise that the Nazis are also on the trail of this coveted prize and it's once again down to Dr Jones to beat them to the punch. Thankfully, Indy is able to call on the help of old flame Marion Ravenwood and together the pair set off to save the world from certain fate at the hands of the Third Reich.

Unlike most sedate text-based adventures, this is a fast-paced game that throws a constant barrage of situations at the player, hardly giving them time to think. It's also completely unforgiving, with the computer killing you off pronto if you take a second too long to think out a puzzle or input an incorrect command.

On reflection, the game is a fair attempt to implement a pure Indy adventure as opposed to the action games that paved the way before it, but as you might expect, it's set back by the usual trappings of the text adventure genre. In fact, the introduction of timed responses actually worsen proceedings, as you rarely have time to logically think through a problem (and then enter the correct commands) before you are crushed/impaled/ burnt etc.



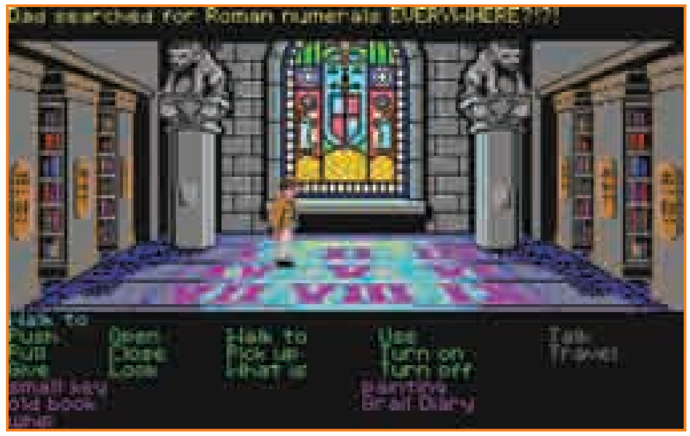


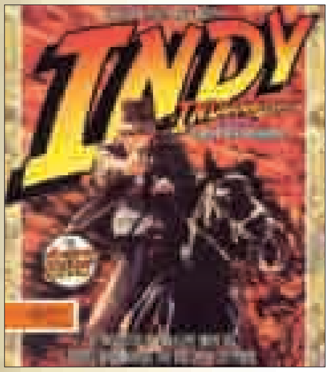


Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

Various 8/16-bit systems, 1989







Despite a rather unsuccessful attempt at porting Atari's Temple of Doom coin-op, the game had sold well for US Gold (no doubt on the strength of the original) and the software publisher decided to pick up rights for home computer versions of the third (and final?) Indiana Jones movie. In an inspired move to appeal to both arcade and role-playing fans, US Gold and Lucasfilm collaborated to make not one, but two separate titles – an action title and an adventure game.

The Action Game

With software coders Tiertex at the helm, the game recreates many of the more memorable action sequences from the blockbuster movie. Players start off controlling young Indy on his quest for the Cross of Coronado in the caves of Utah, moving on to his subsequent escape atop a moving circus train. The game then progresses to the main plot of the film and adult Indy's search for his missing father and the Holy Grail, which takes players to the rat-infested catacombs of Venice, the treacherous walls of Nazi-occupied Castle Brunwald, a Zeppelin airship in mid-flight and the final destination of the Grail Temple itself.



While slightly sluggish, the game is enjoyable enough and the main platform-based levels prove to be difficult yet addictive and fun, with the final level presented as an isometric puzzle-solver. The title met with mixed reviews upon its release in the autumn of 1989, but is certainly a cut above US Gold's interpretation of Atari's coin-op. The Amiga version is the most visually impressive, while the C64 version is more fun to play and makes better use of the machine – though the absence of a young Indy sprite on the opening two levels of all 8-bit versions might be rather jarring for the more observant.

Following the success of The Action Game for 8/16-bit home micros, the title was later ported to a variety of console formats including the NES (1990), the Sega Master System/Game Gear (1992), the Nintendo GameBoy (1993) and the Sega Megadrive (1993). Most versions are more or less generic updates of the original computer game, with slight alterations in graphics and sound. But the jewel in the crown is without question the Megadrive version, which takes the basic concept of the original game and enhances it with improved graphics, in-game music, fluid animation and superior gameplay that feels infinitely slicker. End-of-level baddies are also added to the 16-bit Sega port, with other extras thrown into the level designs such as a brief but highly exhilarating rendezvous with a mine cart in the opening level.



Interestingly, the NES was home to a second Last Crusade action title released by Taito in 1990 that bears little resemblance to the other games, mixing puzzle, driving and platforming elements to good effect.

The Adventure Game

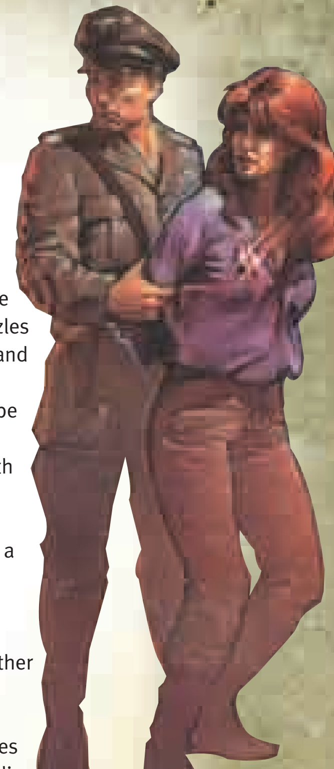
While The Action Game appeared on all popular formats, The Adventure Game surfaced only on the Atari ST, Amiga and PC. Produced by Lucasfilm and distributed by US Gold, the title followed on from Lucasfilm's earlier adventure games such as Zak McCracken and Maniac Mansion. Not only did it come to be regarded as one of the best Indiana Jones games, but it also proved to be one of the best adventure games, period.

Using Lucasfilm's innovative point-and-click interface, this is perhaps the first licence to allow the player to really step into Indy's well-worn boots, even to the point where the game gives the player a rating known as an 'Indy Quotient' at various intervals. The graphics are stunningly detailed, recreating every major scene from the movie in great depth, as well as offering an abundance of additional set pieces not seen in the film. On top of the adventure, exploration and puzzle-solving elements that feature in these types of games, the title also throws in a selection of action sequences for good measure, ranging from practice boxing bouts with the coach at Indy's university to full-on bare-knuckle fights with sinister Nazi henchmen. Audio is stellar too, with intricately reproduced music from the movie and suitable FX mixed into the soundtrack.

As if all that isn't enough, the game is beautifully presented, with striking packaging and a full hard-copy reproduction of Henry Senior's Grail Diary, as seen in the movie, further immersing players into the experience. The game serves as a wonderful companion piece to the movie that not only faithfully recreates it on the computer screen, but also expands on it in ways previously unimagined in the software industry.

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

Various 8/16-bit systems, 1991-1993



Obviously overjoyed with the success of its collaboration on the two Last Crusade games, Lucasfilm (now LucasArts) and US Gold teamed up once more between 1991 and 1993 to release another set of Indy action and adventure games. This time, however, there was no movie to fall back on, so attention was turned to the *Fate of Atlantis* series of comic books released by Dark Horse in the early 1990s. Following the source text closely, the game sees Dr Jones and his new companion, Sophia Hapgood, searching for the fabled aquatic city of ancient times and the powerful machine that sank it to the bottom of the ocean. Set amidst the chaos of World War II, the Nazis predictably have an interest in acquiring this weapon themselves, and yet again it is left to Indy to save the free world.

The Action Game

The Last Crusade Action Game is a successful (if not entirely outstanding) attempt at an arcade-style Indy title, yet 1991's Fate of Atlantis fell flat on its face by attempting to be a jack-of-all-trades and master of none. Released on 8/16-bit home computers, the title ditches the 2D platform format in favour of an isometric 3D viewpoint. The gameplay mixes both action and puzzle elements, resulting in a confused title that sits in neither one genre nor the other. Action fans were bored by the cumbersome tasks that better suited the slow-burning style of adventure games, while RPG fans had the far superior Graphic Adventure release to focus their attention on. In-game visuals are generally poor on all systems, with an annoyingly obtrusive border cramping the playing area. Set across five levels that feature such diverse scenarios as a Nazi submarine, Monte Carlo and ultimately Atlantis itself, the exotic locations sadly could not save this game.

The Adventure Game

Taking full advantage of LucasArts' revolutionary iMUSE and SCUMM systems, the Fate of Atlantis Graphic Adventure is possibly the pinnacle of point-and-click gaming. The fact that the release didn't have a movie plot to rely on makes it even more impressive that such a well-rounded experience with so much depth could be created. The Amiga platform proved to have the definitive version initially with its 1992 debut, but it was later bettered by an upgraded CD-ROM release on the PC in 1993, which included enhanced sound with fully implemented dialogue.

The game was a massive success upon release – it was loved by not only die-hard Indy fans but also passive adventure gamers as well. It remains one of the best examples of an early interactive movie, with many locations to be explored, puzzles to be solved and whip-cracking adventure to be had. Player interaction with computer characters is excellent with a choice of questions and responses to select from rather than endless fumbling with random phrases as seen in earlier text-based adventures. Surprisingly for an adventure game, the replay factor also scores highly due to the differing ways in which the game can be completed, with players able to take paths dictated by action, logic and team strategies at specific junctures.

Also of note was the marketing campaign employed by LucasArts, which saw the production of realistic movie-style posters to promote the game, fuelling ever more speculation that Fate of Atlantis was in fact the next Indy film in production. A sequel to this game, also based on a series of Dark Horse comics, was actually rumoured. Entitled Indiana Jones and the Spear of Destiny, it would no doubt have proved to be another popular entry into the adventure game genre, but sadly nothing ever came of it.







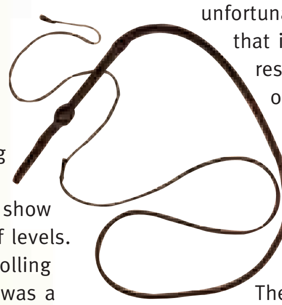
The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles

NES, 1992

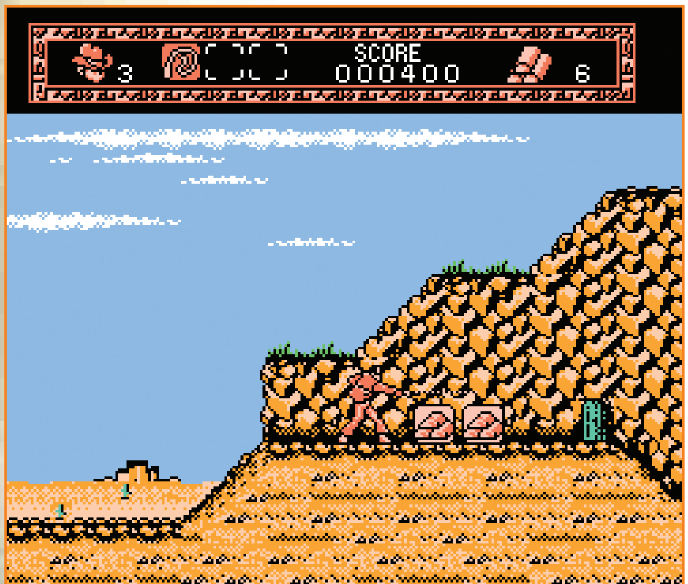
Released in 1992 by LucasArts and Jaleco, this NES cart was based on the popular series of TV movies bearing the same name, encompassing many of the action sequences from the show over a succession of levels.

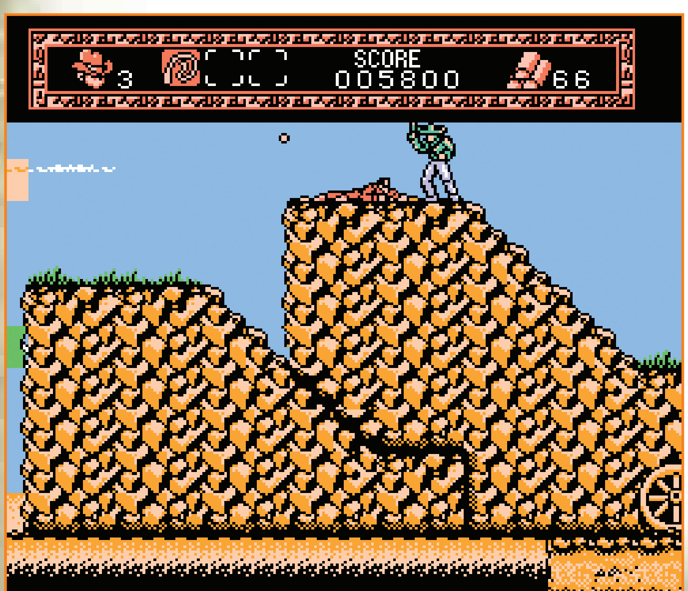
A simple side-scrolling platformer, the title was a sure indication that the NES was nearing the end of its lifespan and was ready to be overthrown by Nintendo's replacement SNES console.

The title features acceptable graphics, sound and gameplay for the 8-bit Nintendo, but is unfortunately a little stale in that it bears a striking resemblance to many other pedestrian NES platform games that came before it, with everything it has to offer having been done a million times before.



The title sees young Indy punching, whipping and jumping his way through a game that looks like it was taken from the leftovers of the Castlevania series, and is subsequently not a very inspiring or exciting experience.





The Instruments of Chaos

Megadrive, 1994

Eager to market the *Young Indiana Jones* TV show in any way possible, LucasArts and Sega produced this tie-in title for the Megadrive. It's similar to the NES game in that it uses the platform genre as its basis and incorporates elements of the TV series into the settings, this time pitting young Indy against the German Kaiser during World War I.

The graphics and sound are obviously superior to the NES effort, but the gameplay is similarly unimaginative and unquestionably boring – perhaps partly stemming from the fact that players would much rather be controlling the adult incarnation of the intrepid archaeologist, rather than the teenage version.

Interestingly, an enhanced Mega-CD version of the game was put into production (no doubt featuring choppy footage from the show), but was quickly cancelled when the Megadrive upgrade failed to take off as expected.





Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures

SNES, 1994

Created by LucasArts and Factor 5 for the Super Nintendo console, this is easily one of the best Indiana Jones games ever produced. With the success of JVC's Super Star Wars trilogy of games on the 16-bit Nintendo, LucasArts decided to give the man with the whip and the hat the SNES treatment as well when it created this stunning slice of action gaming. The title is truly epic and implements every major action sequence from the motion picture trilogy as scenes for each of its 25 challenging levels. For years, fans had been longing to experience the boulder chase in the Peruvian temple, the frantic shootout on the streets of Shanghai and the Alexandretta desert battle. Finally they could.

The game is absolutely massive and includes every set piece an Indy fan could possibly want, even going so far as to feature several 3D driving sections rendered using Mode 7 graphics. The title's presentation is impressive as well, with lots of speech, every

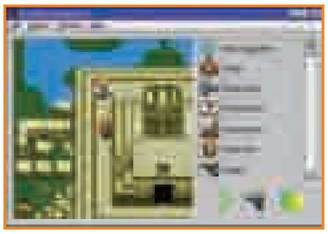
Indiana Jones and his Desktop Adventures

PC, 1996

Intended as a quick fix for busy Indy fans, this package was released as a budget title by LucasArts. Essentially a series of simple games that could be played in a small window on a user's desktop, it was basically a glamorous alternative to playing Solitaire or Minesweeper.

Viewed from an overhead perspective, players control Indy using the mouse in a series of 15 short adventure challenges that each last about half an hour. Basic tasks include interacting with computer characters, fighting bad guys and searching for those ever-elusive artefacts in a variety of surroundings that the game randomly generates.

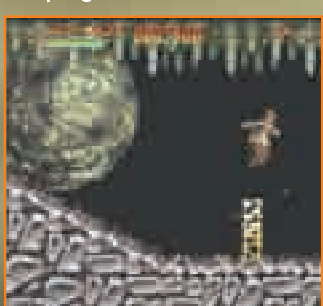
Graphics and sound are OK and although this game is a suitable enough way to pass the time during lunch breaks in the office, it is ultimately tiring and has a limited lifespan compared to LucasArts' full-blown adventure releases. In its defence, however, the package was good value when released, thanks to its budget price tag.

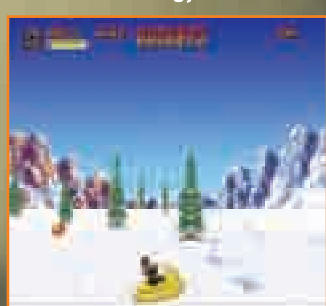




significant piece of music from the trilogy, cutscenes explaining the plot of the films and a generous helping of digitised movie stills. In-game graphics are bold and aptly drawn, while play is fast, fluid and responsive with plenty of action and the odd puzzle element thrown into the mix.

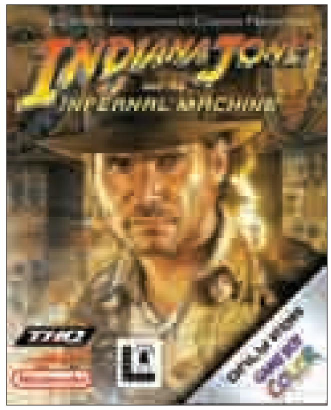
Overall, this game probably ranks level with Atari's Temple of Doom arcade game as the joint-best Indy action title. About the only criticism that could be aimed at the release was that Indy fans were arguably short-changed compared to Star Wars followers, who got a unique game for each instalment of their beloved trilogy.





Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine

PC/N64/GameBoy Color, 1999



After a period of absence during the late 90s, LucasArts rounded off the decade by proudly announcing "The Return of the Original Tomb Raider" in his first fully interactive 3D adventure game. Set after the events of the films and the Fate of Atlantis storyline, the game takes place in the Nazi-free year of 1947 with the Cold War well and truly underway. The Soviets, ever eager to get the upper hand on the Western world, are searching out the legendary Tower Of Babel, a possible resting place of the Infernal Machine – a device with the ability to unlock a dimension gate and swing the balance of power to the East. Approached by the CIA and a familiar face in the form of Sophia Hapgood, Indy is naturally asked to track down the deadly weapon before the Soviets.

The Infernal Machine was the game that brought Indiana Jones right up to speed with the modern world of interactive entertainment. Having been accustomed to more basic 2D action and adventure games, it was evidently a thrill for players to finally be able to control Dr Jones in a Tomb Raider-style environment and really step into a hero's world.

However, while the graphics and sound are expectedly impressive, the gameplay turns out to be problematic due to a glitch-ridden control system. Basic exploration is not an issue, but timing jumps and swinging across bottomless pits are a different matter – both are annoyingly cumbersome processes that require exact positioning to avoid instant death. The puzzle elements are also not designed as well as they could have been, with the necessity for Indy to go back and forth between different settings repeatedly cropping up.

In retrospect, the game is sadly not too original, simply re-treading old ground that the Tomb Raider series covered several years earlier, rather than taking that specific gaming engine and improving on it. Nevertheless, the title is an enjoyable excursion overall and it was great to see everyone's favourite adventurer back in the arena.

The follow-up, Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb, appeared in 2003 but that's far too new for inclusion in this feature. Besides, modern PC and console owners have access to all Indy's earlier, and better, escapades thanks to the wonders of emulation. In particular, the ScummVM emulator (**www.scummvm.org**) resurrects the superb Last Crusade and Fate of Atlantis adventure games on a number of platforms, including PC, Mac and Dreamcast. The fourth film may be a while off, but for now at least, the man with the hat is back.



GILSOFT
The Welsh Wizards

As a short coda to last month's Delta 4 feature, Chris Wild talks to the guys behind Gilsoft, creators of The Quill Adventure Writing System

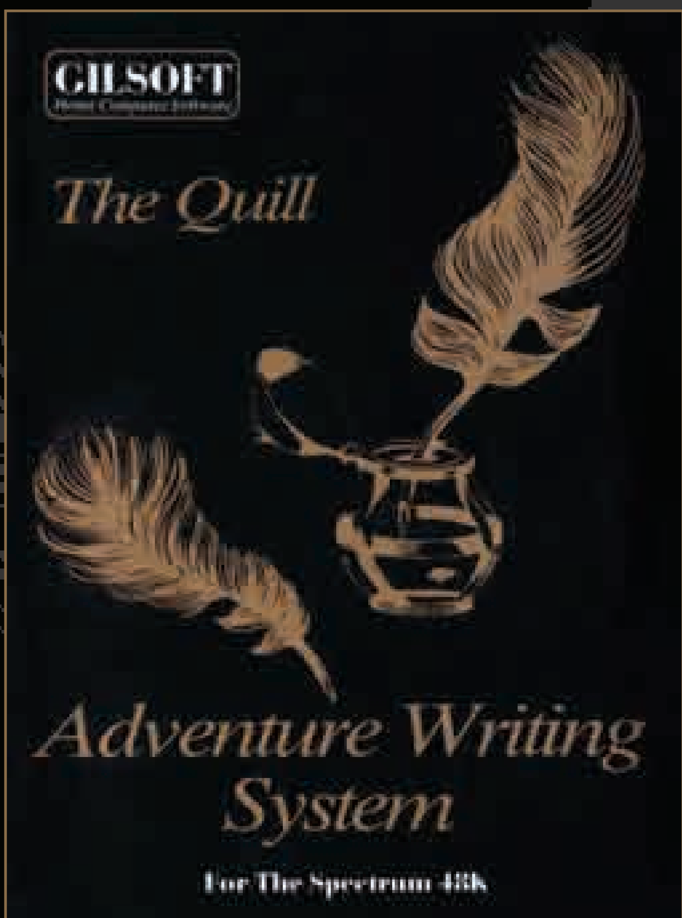
For any aspiring author looking to create a game on their 8-bit computer, the text adventure was always the easiest option. Providing you had a half-decent command of the English language and a fairly logical mind, you could use the version of BASIC that came bundled with your computer to build a simple adventure. But BASIC was slow and inefficient, resulting in limited, laggy adventures that filled the available memory in no time at all. Meanwhile, publishers were putting out commercial adventures written in machine code that were quicker and more complex. How could the bedroom programmer compete? The answer was The Quill from Gilsoft, 'The Welsh Wizards of Adventure'.

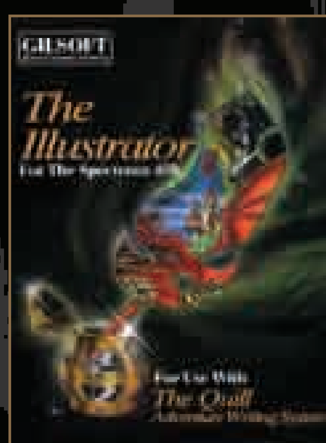
Gilsoft was set up in the early 80s by 17-year-old Tim Gilberts using money from his father. His father ran an electronic device company, selling household items like door chimes, and one day challenged Tim by saying: "Let's put my money where your mouth is." Gilsoft started off very much as a family business. Tim was Technical Director, his father Managing Director, his mother Company Secretary, and his cousin the accountant. The rest of the company was largely made up of friends and neighbours.

In 1982 Graeme Yeandle joined Gilsoft to write text adventures. In order to simplify the process of creating his own adventures, he wrote an authoring tool that was later released commercially as The Quill. Amateurs could now write fast, responsive, commercial-quality adventures without entering a single line of code. The program was completely menu-driven, and although the chunky manual was slightly scary, it didn't take long for users to find their feet and author their first adventure game. It really was a clever piece of kit, and the specialist press was full of praise. "Once in a while, a product comes along to revolutionise the whole microcomputer scene," wrote *Micro Adventurer* magazine in November 1983. "The Quill is one such product, and will change the face of micro-computer adventures."

Revolution came at a price though. The Quill would set you back £14.95, a significant sum for any piece of 8-bit software. But then, Gilsoft expected no royalties from games created using its software and sold commercially, so a copy of The Quill was all you needed to enter the burgeoning software business. And that's what many users did, with Quill-penned games flooding onto the market. The quality of the games obviously varied, but many classic adventures were created using The Quill, including The Boggit (Delta 4), Hampstead (Melbourne House), Dracula (CRL) and Tower of Despair (Games Workshop).

Following the success of The Quill, Gilsoft released The Illustrator, an add-on pack that





Together, The Quill and The Illustrator formed the perfect tool for creating quality graphic adventures



Besides providing the tools to create adventures, Gilsoft also released several of its own under the Gold Collection label



The Quill debuted on the Spectrum, but versions for other machines quickly followed

enabled users to add location graphics to their games, and PAW (Professional Adventure Writer), a standalone follow-up that introduced an enhanced parser capable of understanding more complex commands. Tim and Graeme later worked with Delta 4's Fergus McNeill to produce SWAN (System Without A Name), the third generation of The Quill. Sadly it was only used to create one game (Mindfighter), as the end of the 80s witnessed a gradual shift to point-and-click adventures.

To this day, there are many adventure-creation packages available on the Web and they're all indebted to The Quill and its successors. We tracked down Tim Gilberts and Graeme Yeandle and asked them a few questions about their influential programs.

Retro Gamer: What encouraged you to form Gilsoft?

Tim Gilberts: Gilsoft was set up to try and make some money! I had been knocking together software for the ZX81 for some time, but when I saw the release of the Spectrum, I knew that the machine was going to hit the mass market and there'd be a demand for games. So I wrote rip-offs of most arcade games, which we soon stopped selling due to copyright issues, but there were a few original ones.

RG: How did The Quill come about?

Graeme Yeandle: In the early 80s I was playing an adventure game by Artic Computing. I had read an article in *Practical Computing,* by Ken Reed, about an adventure-creating program to make games like 'Adventure' on large mainframes, but not on micro-computers. The two seemed to be linked. I decided then that I could write an adventure as good as the Artic one. So I wrote Timeline for Gilsoft. While writing this it became apparent that I needed a tool to help me develop the games.

RG: What platforms was The Quill written for?

GY: The Quill was written in Z80 and worked on the Sinclair Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Oric Atmos, QL, and BBC Micro. There was also a 6502 version for the Commodore 64 which was sold in North America as 'Adventure Writer'.

RG: Do you regret not charging a royalty fee for commercially sold Quill games?

GY: The Quill was a software utility. I looked on it in the same way as selling a C compiler, and thus we never considered taking royalties for anything developed with it.

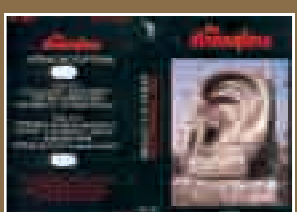


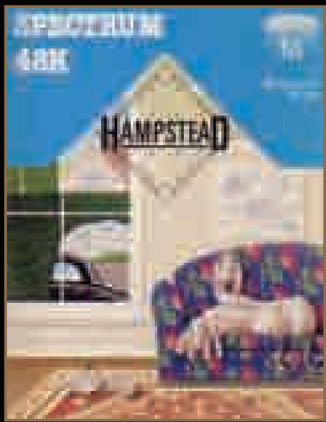


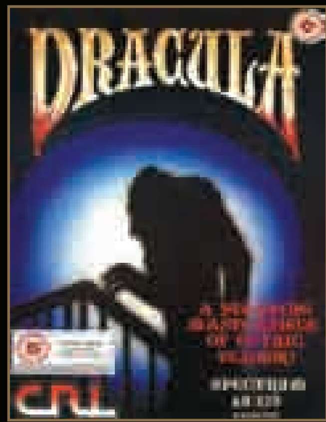
One of Gilsoft's own adventures, Madcap Manor, came with an illustrated game on one side of the tape and an expanded text-only version on the other

›Aural pleasure

As Tim mentions in the interview, a Quill'd Spectrum adventure appeared on The Stranglers' 1984 album, *Aural Sculpture*. Written by Mike Turner, with 'input' from the band members themselves, Aural Quest placed you in the shoes of The Stranglers' tour manager, and saw you collecting parts of a giant ear – or something like that. Still, if you were a Speccy owner and a Stranglers' fan, it was a nice little extra.







Commercial companies such as Melbourne House and CRL picked up and released Quill'd adventures

TG: It would have made it less popular. We also felt that tools should be unfettered. I think today it would be Open Source.

RG: What was the best-selling Quill-authored game?

TG: I don't know what the best-selling Quill game was, but from the number of help-desk calls we received, Denis Through the Drinking Glass must have been very popular. I suppose that the adventure included on The Stranglers' *Aural Sculpture* album sold a lot of copies...

RG: Tell us about the available add-ons to The Quill, such as The Illustrator.

TG: The Illustrator provided a way of adding pictures to Quill'd games using a vector graphics format with a fast shape shader – I was amazed at how good the graphics could be with it in the hands of a professional, which I wasn't. And they occupied only a few hundred bytes. Phil Wade also developed The Patch which did a number of tasks, but mainly it included a clever character-compression system that allowed text to be significantly reduced in memory, giving more text in adventures. Usually it was used to free up enough memory to squeeze graphics in with The Illustrator! It also allowed custom character sets to be used, giving games a unique feel.

RG: The Quill's parser was limited to verb/noun inputs, whereas PAW was expanded to also accept adjectives, adverbs and pronouns. Was this a conscious decision to allow users to create more complex adventures?

TG: Graeme and I always disagreed about extending the parser from the standard verb/noun to the mechanic used in PAW. I'll let him explain why.

GY: "Get the sharp knife and kill the large Orc with it" is too complicated for a user to have to type in and get right. Entering commands needed to be kept simple, and point and click was probably the way to have done it.

TG: I wanted the PAW parser to be intelligent, so people could type in English what they wanted to do and the code would do the rest. I never expected people to make the games more difficult – just to allow people to act more naturally when playing the game.

RG: What are your thoughts on the Graphic Adventure Creator?

GY: GAC was a competitor. Users had a choice.

TG: It was a competitor, but came later to market with an integrated toolset – it was competent but not my cup of tea. We produced PAW to combat it.

RG: What can you tell us about the SWAN system developed for Delta 4?

TG: The SWAN was a custom work to make extra actions and bitmap graphics work in a slick fashion on all the interpreters we had. As a result, Delta 4 could write a game on one platform


GILSOFT NEWS

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QUILL USERS



Surely one of the strangest adventures ever. Playing as Denis Thatcher, you had to make your way to the pub while avoiding wife Maggie!

and then use the same data on all machines, including some such as MSX for which there was no version of The Quill or PAW available.

RG: So what became of Gilsoft?

TG: In the end, Gilsoft folded as it was a limited company. We all went our own ways and my father started selling homebrew wine and beer-making supplies. I now work for the fire service.

RG: Did you ever consider creating point-and-click adventure games?

GY: We did, but to do it properly would have taken a lot of money and I'm not sure there was a market for it then.

TG: Yes, but by then the market was changing to development teams rather than individuals. While working with Aventuras AD in Spain I looked at this as a route forward, but being a purist I didn't take it any further – silly really.

RG: What do you think of the various remakes that are now available?

GY: I have no problem at all with The Quill remakes. It's nice that people are still interested enough to want to do this.

TG: It's great, but I should comment on the copyright issues as each individual creator will have copyright on their works. Technically we only licensed the code for the editor portions so that is not clearly defined, although I am happy for my portions of code to be distributed as is. Quill (and PAW) PC remakes have been a labour of love and it is quite humbling to feel that people liked the product that much.

RG: Looking back, what's your personal favourite Quill'd game?

TG: Out of ours, probably Madcap Manor. I'd choose Dambusters for unusual use. Delta 4 did the best adventures though!

RG: Any final thoughts?

TG: Well, I wish I was still writing games and not looking in despair at the quality of applications sold today by big companies. But with Gilsoft I had a great time and feel I was part of something that affected a lot of people.

›Programmers wanted!

Did you ever use a DIY utility like The Quill to create a game? Or did you actually program a game yourself from scratch? If so, did you send it to a software house in an audacious bid to get it published (with vague hopes of becoming a teenage squillionaire)? Yes? Then *Retro Gamer* would like to hear your experiences. And we'd be doubley pleased if you could provide scans of acceptance/rejection letters. Send your stories and any associated material to **feedback@retrogamer.net**.


REVIEWS

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A Brief History of



VIDEOGAMES

In the first of an exhaustive three-part feature, Spanner Spencer charts the pioneering early work on which today's videogame industry is founded. The story begins in 1951, with the origins of the great grandfather of home consoles, the Magnavox Odyssey, and follows the winding breadcrumb trail of illustrious ping-pong games and evocative ROM-less delights that lead to the videogame revolution

In 1952, AS Douglas wrote a PhD paper at Cambridge University on human-computer interaction. To demonstrate his thesis he used the university's EDSAC (Electronic Delay Storage Automatic Calculator) valve-driven analog computer, fitted with a cathode-ray tube display divided into a matrix of 35x16 dots (or 'pixels', as we prefer these days), to play noughts and crosses against a human competitor. This is considered to be the earliest known computer game ever created.

In 1958, William Higinbotham was head of Instrumentation Division at Brookhaven National Laboratory. Using an analog computer combined with a custom PCB (Printed Circuit Board), he put together Tennis for Two, a simple game to spice up the increasingly tedious open days held at the lab. The game was viewed from the side on a 5in oscilloscope screen. Players had to 'hit' a ball back and forth using handheld buttons to return the ball and a rotary potentiometer to set the angle of deflection. If the ball was missed or hit the central net, it would return at an 'unnatural' angle. Higinbotham never took out a patent on the invention, despite its immense popularity at the shows. If he had, there is a very real possibility the US government would now own the rights to anything considered a 'computer game'.

At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1962, Steve Russell wrote a program called Spacewar on a PDP-1 mini interactive computer donated by the manufacturer, DEC. It had been given to MIT's think tank so that it could come up with an impressive use for the machine that would help with sales, though a spaceship game was not what it expected. Ultimately, DEC supplied the game to customers to use as a diagnostic test.

Spacewar was inspired by the science-fiction writer EE 'Doc' Smith and required players to fly spaceships around the CRT display while firing at the opponent and avoiding the gravitational pull of the 'sun' in the centre of the screen. The computer program for Spacewar took 200 hours to write, but due to the circumstances under which the game was developed, Steve Russell never made a penny from his program.



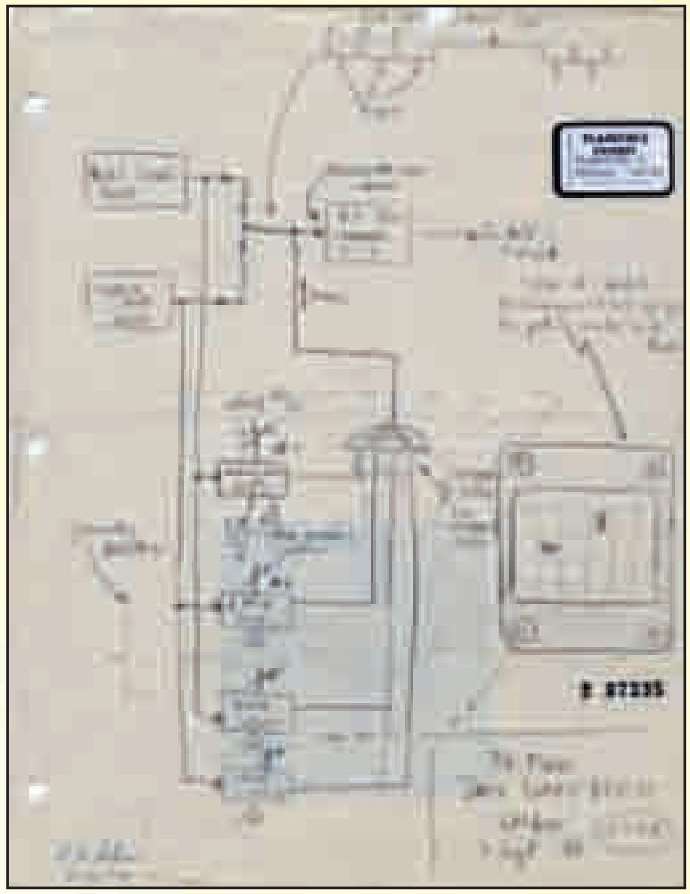
Ralph Baer, the man behind the infamous Brown Box, and the granddaddy of videogames

It is a matter of some deliberation and a great deal of personal interpretation as to who can be credited with founding the electronic game concept. What is certain is that none of these three pioneers developed their projects into marketable products, or apparently had any intention of ever doing so. They were present at the embryonic stages, but were not involved with either the chicken or the egg.

It was Ralph H Baer who first had the notion of creating a dedicated videogame system, as he called it, to play games on a standard television set instead of the early computers that were practically inaccessible to the general public. The idea shows the differentiation between computer games and videogames, and shows the brilliance of his vision.

In the beginning...

Ralph was born in Germany in 1922 and emigrated to New York with his family in 1938. He graduated from the National Radio Institute as a technician and ran several radio service shops around the New York area, before being drafted into the US Army. Ralph served for three years with the American Military Intelligence, one in the US and two in Europe. Upon completion of his service he attended the American Television Institute of Technology in Chicago, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in TV Engineering, the first qualification of its kind.



A schematic of Ralph Baer's TV Game, dated 6th September 1966

Working on various types of electro-medical equipment until 1951, including RF generators for tissue cutting and ablation, he moved on to Lorel Electronics to become its senior engineer working on IBM time-punch clocks and an analog military computer for submarine-tracking radar systems.

At Lorel he was approached with the rather ambiguous specification of developing 'the best television set in the world'. During the concept stage of this world-beating TV he had the notion of being able to play an interactive game on the set itself, an idea that was immediately and expectedly rubbished by his employers. For the next 15 years, the seed of his creative vision lay dormant, waiting for the ideal industrial soil in which to grow.

By 1966 Ralph was Chief Engineer for Equipment Design at Sanders Associates, a high-tech defence electronics consultancy. While waiting at a bus depot for another Sanders engineer, he jotted down some notes detailing his old idea of an interactive TV game, including what type of games would be feasible and how they would be displayed on a home television set.

By September of that year he had a simple schematic diagram showing how a 'chase game' circuit would operate and could be transmitted on the VHF channel three or four RF carrier, displaying two user-controlled squares chasing each other against a coloured background on a standard television set. Assigning one of his technicians,

"It is a matter of some deliberation and a great deal of personal interpretation as to who can be credited with founding the electronic game concept"

Bob Tremblay, to the job of building a circuit capable of generating the user-controlled dot meant that by February of 1967 his concept was finally visible on a TV screen.

The development team was increased to four technicians, including Ralph, and they set about redesigning the original valve-driven circuit into a transistorised version. With the idea of creating multiple-choice games in mind, the team built an optical sensor into a toy pistol to use as an interface device, pointing it at the screen and pulling the trigger to make a selection.

By May of that year, the team had succeeded in creating a 'pumping game' that used a screen overlay depicting a fireman and a house on fire. One player pumped water in an attempt to expand the blue lower half of the screen while the other player worked to expand the red upper half.

A second design attempted to incorporate its own RF oscillator and sync generators to create the TV picture (previously they had re-engineered an off-the-shelf TV modulator to generate the video signal). It also included a second spot generator and a coincidence detector that could make one spot disappear when touched by the other, giving more of a purpose to the chase game. The light gun was also redeveloped to make a target-shooting game possible.

Management at Sanders was impressed and Ralph decided to develop a unit #3, a simple games system that would retail for US$25. This was a revised version of the second unit, simplified to increase stability and reduce cost. It was capable of playing the chase and light gun games in black and white, as the colour generator circuits had been removed for cost-effectiveness. They also adopted a modular design system to simplify test and manufacture of the PCBs.

Unfortunately, the new version cost US$16 to produce, meaning a retail price of around US$50 was more likely. This was a major setback, as the unit would have to include some far more enticing games to justify that kind of price. Bill Rusch was brought on board due to his renowned creative streak. Within a few weeks of familiarising himself with the project he came up with an idea that would dominate the videogame market for over a decade: a third, system-controlled spot. This meant bat-and-ball games could be played, and the first idea he put on paper was called Ping-Pong.

The Brown Box

The project was briefly delayed becaue engineers were required on other projects, but unit #4 was ready for November 1967. The unit played Ping-Pong using Bill Rusch's third system spot generator, but his diode-based designs (that produced far more aesthetically pleasing round dots as opposed to the usual rectangular ones) had to be replaced due to their susceptibility to thermal changes, causing dots to drift around and change shape as the circuit warmed up.

Work quickly began on a fifth unit that would incorporate differential and comparator circuitry to apply realistic 'reactions' to the system spot, changing its parameters depending on the direction and velocity of its coincidence with the user-controlled spots. Before this could be fully integrated, however, the more pressing matter of marketing the 'TV Game' took precedence.

Sanders, being primarily involved in military electronics, was not the ideal company to market this product and was looking for a licensee to put it out. Ralph had the idea of incorporating the system with cable TV equipment, as the providers could transmit a photorealistic background (such as a tennis court) on the appropriate channel for TV Game to superimpose its video signal onto. This bright idea was of real interest to some of the cable providers. Unfortunately, they were all going through difficult times and were unable or unwilling to risk the endeavour, regardless of how it might rejuvenate their business.

Funding continued for the project until early 1968, allowing for a couple of hardware refinements and some extra game development (mostly derivatives of Ping-Pong), until funds were not only cut, but all lab time was stopped. For the next eight months, the TV Game project sat untouched.

›Gaming Godfathers

AS Douglas, the EDSAC, and Noughts and Crosses

The EDSAC (Electronic Delay Storage Automatic Calculator) was constructed by Maurice Wilkes at Cambridge University and ran its first program on 6 May 1946.

The system used 32 mercury delay lines for its memory core. These consisted of a column of mercury with piezo-electric crystal transducers at either end (not unlike a speaker and microphone) that would pulse when data was received from the computer. The pulse travelled through the mercury (used due to its acoustic properties being almost identical to that of the quartz crystals) and would be converted back into electrical 'data' by the piezo at the other end. Additional circuitry could send the pulse back and forth between the crystals, thereby indefinitely sustaining the data as long as power was applied. When the computer wanted the data back, it compared the pulse times to a master clock and extracted the data from the appropriate delay line.

Logic circuits were built using valves and relays, since transistors had only just been invented and it would be a long time before they were in common use. Three cathode-ray tube displays were attached, one of which monitored the contents of the delay lines. Each tank stored 16 words of 35 bits, so the display was configured as a matrix of 35x16 dots that were illuminated appropriately to display the data contained in a specific line.

While attending Cambridge, AS Douglas was writing a thesis on Human-Computer Interaction and was lucky enough to have access to one of Britain's few working computers, which he used to demonstrate his point. His ingenious idea was to use the mercury tank monitor as a 35x16 dot graphical display. His program played noughts and crosses against a human component using a telephone pulse dialler as an input device. By applying data to the delay lines in such a way (not particularly relevant to the program) he was able



Anyone wanting to know a bit more about the EDSAC can download an emulator that comes packaged with AS Douglas' game at **www.dcs.warwick.ac.uk/~edsac**



Before the Odyssey was the Brown Box, seen here with dual controllers and light gun

In September 1968, finances improved and unit #6 was built. This was a rudimentary update of the various components that had been tweaked since the previous version, and was also graced with a rotary switch, used for game selection. This prototype made clear the importance of accessibility to the games and unit #7 was fitted with slide switches, allowing for a choice of 16 game variations. This was the unit tastefully – at least by 1960s' standards – covered in wood effect Fablon (inspiration for the Atari VCS?) and duly dubbed the Brown Box.

Unit #8 was an add-on that plugged into unit #7. It incorporate the differential and comparator circuitry, providing dynamic motion effects for the ball games. By this point, Sanders Associates hada working TV Game system, but still no one to sell it to.

Boxing clever

Ralph was as convinced as ever that this product should be the domain of the television industry, so Louis Etlinger (Sanders' Corporate Director of Patents) invited representatives from all the major TV manufacturers in America to come for a demonstration. Of all those who attended, only Magnavox showed any genuine interest. However, It still took until March 1971 for the deal to be finalised and design data to be turned over to Magnavox engineers.

The two teams worked closely together and the first prototype of the Magnavox Odyssey Model 1TL200 TV Game was ready for the third quarter of 1971. It was essentially a direct copy of the Brown Box, with the colour generators removed in favour of plastic screen overlays



Cambridge University's EDSAC, shortly after completion in 1949 (Photograph copyright Cambridge University Computer Laboratory)

to 'draw' the game board, making the first ever graphical computer game.

William Higinbotham, BHL & Tennis for Two

Previously, William had worked as a physicist for the Manhattan Project, racing to develop the first atomic bomb before Germany. Therefore, he was present at the first atomic bomb test in New Mexico with Robert Oppenheimer before moving on to the Brookhaven National Laboratory.

The lab regularly held visitors' days, which mostly consisted of static data displays. In 1958, Higinbotham said: "It might liven up the place to have a game that people could play, and which would convey the message that our scientific endeavours have relevance for society."

His division had a small analog computer that contained 10 hardwired operational amplifiers. Using an additional circuit of his own design (comprising resistors, valves, capacitors and relays), he and fellow technician Bob Dvorak were able to display different curves on an oscilloscope's tube.

Four of the op-amps were used to generate the realistic, gravitationally affected 'ball' motions, while the others handled collision of the ball with the ground or net. In order for the scope to draw the game, it had to multiplex between the court, net and ball. Valves and relays were not responsive enough to handle this, so Higinbotham made pioneering use of the relatively new semi-conductor 'transistor' technology.

Tennis for Two was kept on display for two years and was very popular with visitors. It also received an upgrade in its second year to a 10 or 15in scope and had adjustable gravity effects proportional to playing on either the moon or Jupiter. As the system used rather expensive components, it was eventually dismantled and its parts used for other projects.



William Higinbotham created Tennis for Two while working at the Brookhaven National Laboratory



The Magnavox Odyssey – "the electronic game of the future"

and the slide switches for game selection replaced with plug-in 'program' cards.

The system had no CPU, so it relied on links being made at specific points within the circuit that set the parameters for the various components' interactions, thereby generating different games. These cards actually didn't contain any programs (or components) at all, but were double-sided PCBs with linking tracks that determined how the unit would operate. In retrospect, any electronics buff could have put together a 'programmable' card with definable jumpers that would play any and all the system's games, if they knew which of the two sets of 22 connections to bridge. This turned out to be an excellent marketing manoeuvre as it made after-sales of games possible. Sadly, not all Magnavox's sales policies were so shrewd.

Initial press and advertising for the Odyssey was handled well and reaction from the various trade shows hosted across the country was excellent. By the summer of 1972, Magnavox was shipping production models of the Odyssey to its selected dealers.

It was Magnavox's policy to only supply through authorised dealers, and with the unit retailing at a whopping US$100 with six program cards (and a further US$25 if you wanted the redesigned light gun), its market was seriously limited. An additional 10 games were available to buy separately, though sales staff were not adequately trained to advise customers about the games and very few were sold.

A mistake was also made in the TV advertising campaign when Magnavox insinuated (purposely or not, we guess we'll never know) that the system would only work with a Magnavox television. Even after handcuffing itself to that particular radiator, Magnavox still managed to shift over 80,000 Odyssey units and 20,000 light guns. Add to this encouraging overseas sales (beginning in 1973) and the Odyssey's success quickly became apparent.

Success, of course, brought robust competition.

The Atari age

As a young engineering student at Stanford University, Nolan Bushnell had seen the Spacewar



A rare photograph of Tennis for Two running at BNL in 1958

Steve Russell, the PDP-1 and Spacewar

One of the first DEC Programmed Data Processors, costing a massive US$120,000, was installed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for scholars to create dynamic, alluring demonstration software to help sell the beast.

Still before the days of integrated circuits, the PDP-1 was built using discrete transistors and core memory. ROM was handled by way of user input, in the form of tape, punchcards or teletype. The system's RAM was built of 18-bitword core memory, comprising three wires running through three ferrite cores. Two wires applied power to the cores while the third magnetised and demagnetised the ferrite rings in order to read and write data. Reading in this manner was very slow, but core memory did have the advantage of being non-volatile.

Before the machine was even running, a group of students (J Martin Greatz, Wayne Witanen and Steve 'Slug' Russell) decided to involve onlookers by creating a game. Their love of 'soap opera' sci-fi (mainly EE 'Doc' Smith, who had a degree in chemical engineering and was the man who first figured out how to make powdered sugar stick to doughnuts) meant there could be only one type of game: a spacewar adventure! After fetching a tape from the manufacturers that contained cos/sin mathematical routines for the PDP, programming could begin.

The dynamic motion of the two ships (named 'wedge' and 'pencil' after their shapes) was based on actual physical theory, such as a frictionless environment, mass, fuel consumption, gravity and inertia. To eliminate the opponent, 'proximity-detonated' torpedoes were fired across the screen. The velocity of the torpedoes was calculated by adding a set propulsion rate for the missile to the current velocity of the ship. This meant clever tricks could be performed, like propelling the ship very quickly then turning

computer program running on the resident PDP-1 (and probably met Steve Russell who by then worked at the university), a program that would become the basis for the first ever coin-operated game, Computer Space. Rather than using software, Computer Space consisted of a dedicated PCB packed full of logic gates that played a simplified version of Spacewar, with the gravitational effects removed.

Bushnell developed the game at home and Nutting Associates was selling it by 1971. Although it flopped, it did set the standard for arcade cabinet design and also prompted Bushnell to form Atari with Ted Dabney.

Examples of Computer Space can be seen in the movies *Soylent Green* (1973) and *Jaws* (1975), two films that both involved people being eaten, though we're sure that's not Nolan Bushnell's influence. The directors were obviously people of considerable vision and inadvertently immortalised Nolan's failed machine.

After the Computer Space endeavour, Nolan realised that half-cut beer jockeys were not willing to stand at an arcade machine reading an instruction manual before inserting quarters. The gameplay had to be simple from the outset, so Atari's first employee, Allan Alcorn, was put to the task of developing a more 'immediate' machine.

In only a few weeks Alcorn had put together Nolan's proposed 'tennis' game using over 60 digital logic ICs, making for a clean, stable but considerably more expensive videogame than had previously been seen. As this was destined for the arcades rather than living rooms, the elevated costs were acceptable if it meant a reliable system and playable game.

Atari's red and black prototype was installed at a local pub called Andy Capp's Tavern to gauge public reactions. The unit was mounted on pinball machine legs, kept the score digitally on the screen and used 'paddle' controls which kind of worked like an Etch-A-Sketch. Named 'Pong' due to the hollow ringing noise made by the ball (and the fact that Ping-Pong was already copyrighted) the game demanded attention.

In about a week, Alcorn received a call from Andy Capp's saying the game was out of order. A brief investigation found that rather than there being a fault, the machine was so packed full of money that it had jammed up the makeshift coin mechanism and stopped the system from registering new players. The machine was a success and, in late 1972, production began.



The Odyssey in action. Early adverts promoted the console's multiplayer possibilities



If you want to try Spacewar, there's a Java version you can play in your Web browser located at **http://lcs.www.media.mit.edu/groups/el/projects/spacewar**

round and firing a torpedo backwards, leaving an almost stationary 'mine' floating in space.

Strategies were soon formed whereby players sat in their respective corners and fired torpedoes at each other. To stop this, a 'dark star' was placed at the centre of the screen exerting a strong, realistic, gravitational pull on the ships. If players sat still they would be pulled into the sun, and since there was a limited amount of fuel, escape from the event horizon could become difficult.

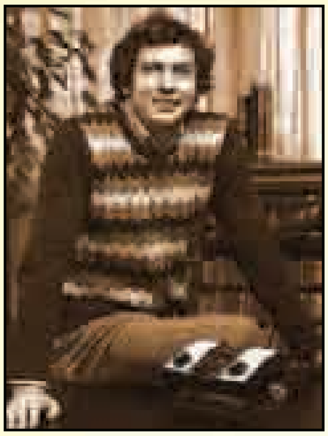
To help with visual acuity, a star field background was applied so slow movement of the ships could be picked out. The star field was an accurate depiction of the night sky seen from Earth and scrolled across the display at about one day per hour. Finally, the game had a 'hyperspace' routine, so the ships could be made to disappear briefly before reappearing on the same trajectory and speed, in the hope of avoiding an accurate shot.

Although it wasn't what it expected, DEC took Spacewar and wrote it into the non-volatile RAM before shipping a PDP. That way, customers knew their machine was working if they switched it on and Spacewar started playing.

Steve Russell is rather modest about his role in videogame history. "If I hadn't done [Spacewar], someone would've done something equally exciting if not better in the next six months," he is quoted as saying. "I just happened to get there first."



Scholarly types enjoying a game of Spacewar at MIT



Atari founder Nolan Bushnell was successfully sued by Magnavox for 'borrowing' Baer's game designs

Pong was massive, and before Atari could patent its game, copies were being churned out at a rate of knots. Variations of the game were appearing in cocktail cabinets, uprights, even mounted in old barrels, all within a few weeks of the first production models going on sale. But before Atari had chance to take legal issue with the onslaught of clones, Magnavox unleashed its own lawyers.

Pong wars

At the Magnavox Profit Caravan product show in Burlingame, California on May 24th 1972, the guest book was signed by none other than Nolan Bushnell – one month before Atari was an officially registered company. It seems Nolan had visited the show and had a hands-on experience of the Odyssey and its Ping-Pong game.

The first ever videogame lawsuit (although many more were to follow) was filed by Magnavox against Atari for patent infringement of its electronic bat and ball-style games. Nolan Bushnell insisted that Pong was not copied from the Odyssey game, but after seeing his name in the guest book and comparing the similarity of the two games, the judge ruled in favour of Baer. Atari agreed to pay a shin-kicking US$700,000 'paid up licence' to Magnavox, a one-off expense for the right to carry on producing Pong games. Future licensees would pay on a royalty basis, so in retrospect, Atari certainly came out better with this one-off payment.

By 1974, the Odyssey was selling well in America and parts of Europe. Atari was shifting Pong coin-op machines by the thousand and dozens of other companies were getting in on the video tennis craze, both on the home and commercial scenes. The videogame age had well and truly begun, 25 long years after it was first thought of.

But the public would only be happy to keep playing Ping-Pong games for so long. Whoever was first to give them something better would be crowned the Silicone King, while all others would be sent to the block. Everyone wanted that prize, and they were willing to do whatever it took to get it.

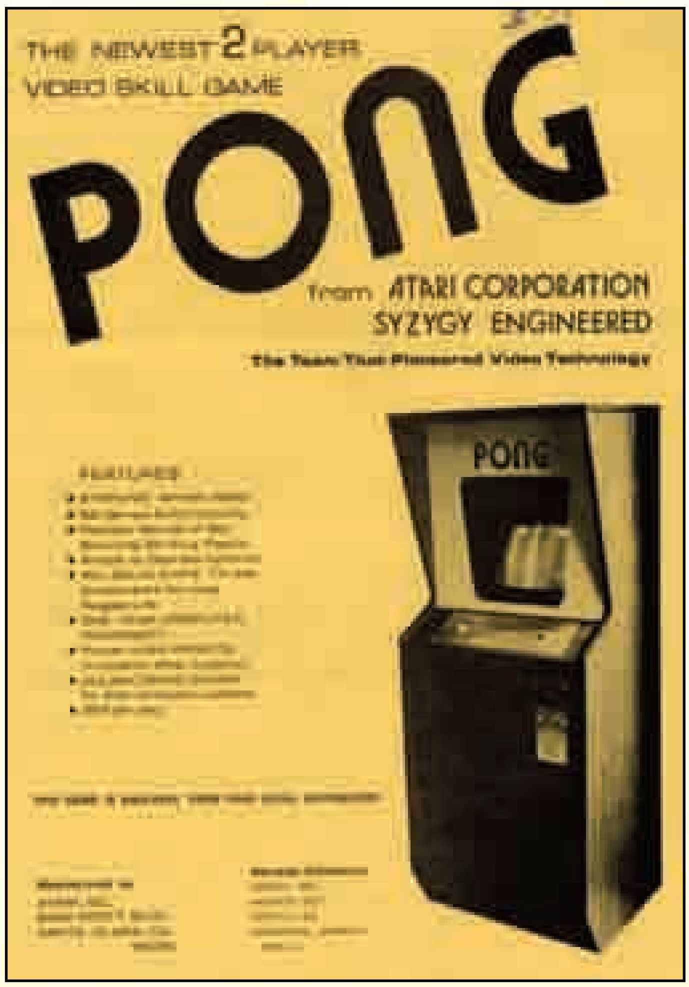
War was was on its way.

›Next month

The massive emergence of home videogame systems makes the new industry billions. In 1978, Ping-Pong game sales dry up, and it's 'make or break' time for manufacturers. The Atari VCS and Magnavox Odyssey 2 mark the next stage in videogame technology, and Nintendo appears as a new contender. Arcade games set the standards with Space Invaders, Asteroids, Tank, Pac-Man and Donkey Kong. Fierce competition drives prices into discount and loss, and the market suddenly drops away. Many companies go bust, while others (including Magnavox) get out, causing the great videogame crash...



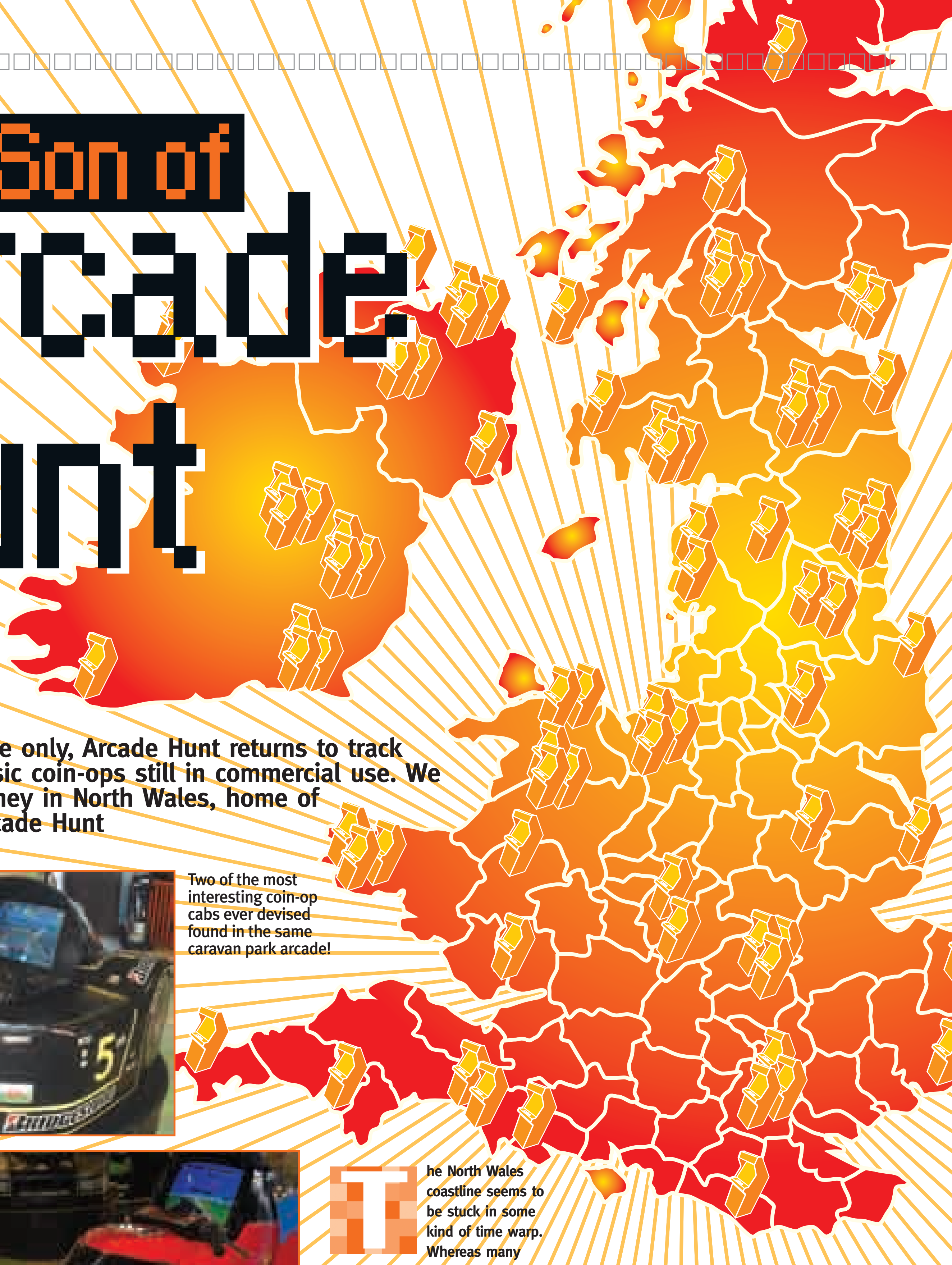
Despite its striking appearance, Computer Space passed without much notice. Not even a sexy lady in a see-though dress could save it



Following a successful trial run in 1972, Pong machines were shipped all over the world

eMag

Son of Arcade Hunt



For a limited time only, Arcade Hunt returns to track down more classic coin-ops still in commercial use. We resume our journey in North Wales, home of the very first Arcade Hunt





Two of the most interesting coin-op cabs ever devised found in the same caravan park arcade!

The North Wales coastline seems to be stuck in some kind of time warp. Whereas many other seaside resorts have been modernised for the new millennium, the towns from Llandudno up to Prestatyn look and feel the same now as they did 20 years ago, with tacky souvenir shops lining the streets and the sounds of old wooden rollercoasters (and other deadly looking fairground rides) filling the air. This is not a criticism but rather something to savour, because anybody who holidayed here as a kid will find that not a lot has changed. And yes, that means that the bright and brash arcades lining the seafront are still packed with retro arcade machines.

Back in issue five, we visited Rhyl for our first Arcade Hunt, and found that many of the amusement arcades had scrapped retro games in favour of fruit machines and toy grabbers.





Don't let the kiddie rides put you off – the small arcade at Palins Holiday Park is home to many great games

There were gems to be found though, lurking in the dark recesses at the back of some of the larger arcades. We were later told (by a *Retro Gamer* reader) that Towyn, a smaller resort a couple of miles down the coast from Rhyl, was a much better hunting ground for classic cabinets. So on the hot Easter weekend at the beginning of April we set off with a digital camera and a pocket full of change.

Hunting ground

Towyn basically consists of two roads – Towyn Road, which runs parallel to the coast, and Sandbank Road, which cuts down to the beach. The majority of arcades are located on these two roads, but experience has told us never to ignore caravan parks, as these are often home to their own arcades. Approaching the town from the direction of Rhyl (along the A548), you come to a narrow bridge that leads to Towyn Road. On the right before the bridge, however, is the Golden Sands Holiday Park. In the small on-site arcade we immediately found the superb sit-down versions of Sega's Hang-On and Konami's WEC Le Mans 24

›Reader report

Mark Stewart visits the superb-sounding Space City in Camber, Sussex

Last week I visited an arcade at the little coastal town of Camber, near Rye in Sussex, and was very impressed by some of the retro machines residing there.

Space City is located in a car park only yards from Camber's sandy beach. Despite the sign proclaiming that it offers "The Latest Videos", I was delighted to find this wasn't the case. In total there are about a dozen retro games, including some absolute gems playing at approximately 20 pence per credit. The units that were running when I visited were 1942, Afterburner (stand-up), Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles, X-Men, Street Fighter II Championship Edition, Operation Thunderbolt, Gun Fighters: Lethal Enforcers 2, Street Hoop Basketball, Terminator 2 and Virtua Striker. There were also two NeoGeo cabs (running Thrash Rally and Metal Slug), and, best of all, an original 1979 Asteroids, which my eight-year-old daughter Jade was particularly taken with.

All the units are in perfect working order. I spoke to the owners, Paul and Tim, who were extremely helpful and friendly, and they told me that the machines are checked and serviced at least a couple of times a week. Paul also told me he was expecting a Galaxians machine in very soon.

The guys said they had only recently bought the arcade and had a few expansion plans for it. They'd be acquiring some more up-to-date games, but also continuing to maintain the classics, and would certainly prefer unproductive machines to go to collectors rather than be scrapped. Tim in particular would like to add a few of his favourites from the past, including Sinistar, Peter Packrat and Ikari Warriors.

So that's about it. If you're in the area, why not check it out?



















Is Black Cat II the best retro arcade in North Wales? Quite possibly, if this little lot is anything to go by

(remember, the one modelled on the front of an actual Le Mans racing car and that turned 180 degrees from side to side?). Both are in excellent working condition, which is surprising considering the number of penniless kids who've tried to 'play' them in attract mode over the years. Having said that, we're pretty sure that WEC didn't ship with Welsh Dragon and Union Jack stickers… Still, a great start to our search.

Leaving the camp, we crossed the bridge and saw Palins Holiday Park on the left. The on-site arcade here is packed with retro cabinets, including (deep breath) Operation Wolf, Line of Fire, Lethal Enforcers, WWF Superstars, Golden Axe, Sunset Riders, Ironman Ivan Stewart's Super Off Road, Virtua Racing, Final Lap 2, Suzuka 8 Hours, Indy 500, 1,000 Mile Rally, Pit Fighter and Street Fighter II Hyper Fighting Edition. Some of the games are in generic cabinets, but the majority are dedicated cabinets in generally good shape. Better still, they're all 20 pence a play! Also pleasing was the sight of younger gamers, no doubt born and bred on PlayStation, enjoying these relatively simple machines.

The arcades dotted along Towyn Road are less rewarding, with the ever-popular Sega Rally 2 and Time Crisis 2 being about the oldest machines on show. The Black Cat arcade is the exception – it offers Ridge Racer 2, Final Lap 3 and Suzuka 8 Hours (the four-player version). Better by far is Black Cat II, situated around the corner on Sandbank Road. The number of retro cabinets in here is amazing, with many ageing but well-maintained classics. Greeting you as you walk through the door is Namco's Lucky & Wild, a bonkers cross between Chase HQ and Operation Wolf, and a couple of dedicated Sega cabs in the shape of Rad Mobile and Sky Target. Venturing further into the arcade reveals machines of increasing age, beginning with Prop Cycle, Alpine Racer, Sega Rally and Ridge Racer, then leading to Street Fighter II: The World Warrior, Hard Drivin', Operation Thunderbolt, and Roadblasters. However, the real finds are located right at the back. Sandwiched between a couple of soulless fruit machines are Sega's Wonderboy (housed in a cab with a Shinobi marquee) and Midway's GORF (in its original dedicated cab, although because of its position you can't see the amazing side panel art). GORF is just 10 pence a go, so we enjoyed a good five minutes of play for the same price as a single spin on the fruit machine next to it.

Playing GORF again was great, but the highlight had to be Taito's Darius. This two-player side-scrolling shoot-em-up is uniquely played on three horizontal monitors, so the cabinet is really wide and imposing, with great panel artwork. Due to its size (it must weigh an absolute ton!) you rarely ever see Darius these days, making this a significant find.

Shady Sonic

Our final stop was Knightley's Leisure, located at the far end of Sandbank Road. Inside we found Blood Brothers (the sequel to Cabal), Area 51, House of the Dead and Sonic the Hedgehog. That's right – Sonic in an arcade cab. Not Sonic Championship (the VF2-style beat-em-up) or SegaSonic the Hedgehog (the



On the right is the impressive DIY version of Sonic the Hedgehog residing in Knightley's

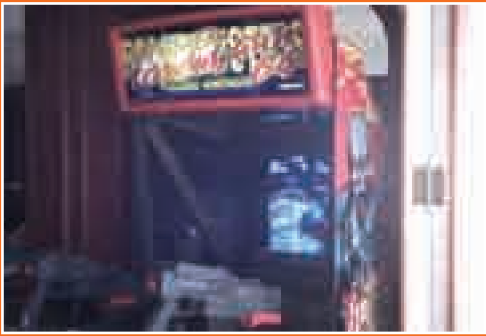
isometric arcade outing), but the original Megadrive Sonic. Searching for information, we asked a guy fixing one of the machines, and he told us that he'd built six of the machines back in the early 90s (and used the profit made to buy a second-hand Range Rover, no less). He'd basically worked out how to display the Megadrive output on an RGB monitor, then stuffed the console and Sonic game inside a generic cab. The example in Knightley's is the prototype on which the other five models were based, and he told us with more than a little satisfaction that the game had been running almost every day for the last 15 years and never needed maintenance. He also revealed that he created and sold a single Sonic 2 machine, so that too may be still running somewhere.

The Sonic story was the perfect end to a great day. Towyn is certainly worth a visit this summer, and it doesn't even matter if it's pouring down outside (which it probably will be), because with so many classic coin-ops to play, the beach and beer garden won't be on the agenda anyway.



›Reader report

Arcade Hunt regular Ant Cooke sends word of retro games in Majorca. Wish you were there?





Some might question why I've been searching out arcades in Majorca, but I was going there on holiday, so any excuse really!

One particular type of machine appeared in several arcades I visited – 33-in-One (sometimes also known as Game History) offers many games, including titles like Bubble Bobble, Puzzle Bobble, Super Pang, Ghosts 'n' Goblins, Blazing Star and Vendetta. From a menu, you can pick any of the games (the titles vary slightly from machine to machine), insert your coin, and after a brief pause (during which the games presumably load via emulation) you can begin playing. However, these machines are far from perfect. Some games (like The Punisher and Cadillacs and Dinosaurs) have no sound, while others (all the Metal Slug games and Insector X) suffer from sound and slowdown problems.

I visited three main areas in Majorca – Palma Nova, Torrenova, and Magaluf. Palma Nova has several interesting arcades. In the hotel Lunamarr, where I stayed, there's a Puzzle Bobble 3 machine alongside the Hyper NeoGeo 64 game Road's Edge (which is in beautiful condition – no screen burn, no damage to the machine itself, nothing).



Moving out of the hotel, there's Rodger's Fun Palace, which has another Hyper NeoGeo 64 game and Hyper Tommy Gun 64 (better known as Beast Busters: Second Nightmare), which is also in perfect condition. Another arcade near the beach has Soul Calibur (though it's in poor condition) and a huge-monitor version of House of the Dead (complete with a hilarious message on the side – "Keep Away! The shooting game strikes fear into people's hearts!"). Finally, on the stretch of road that leads to Golf Fantasia, there are two arcades. In the first, Tropica Arcade, lies Double Dragon (the NeoGeo one-on-one fighter), Tecmo World Cup '90 and another copy of Road's Edge, again in brilliant condition. The other arcade, Golden Bells, has one of the 33-In-One machines, as well as Wonderboy and a stand-up OutRun 2. Not exactly a retro game, but still...

Torrenova, next to Palma Nova, also has a few machines of interest. In a nameless arcade there was another 33-In-One machine, as well Sega's rare Moto Raid, Namco's Tokyo Wars, and one of those cheap, tacky Real Puncher rip-offs, Photo Punch 2000. Another nameless arcade near the top of the hill in the town has a Puzzle Bobble 3 machine (with an awful monitor that has lost nearly all its colour), Kick & Kick by Konami, and another Real Puncher machine.

Finally, Magaluf has only one real arcade – the bizarrely named Benny Hill Place. As well as offering another 33-In-One machine, it's also got Daytona USA, Puzzle Bobble, Die Hard Arcade and House of the Dead. However, there are several 'dead' machines in the arcade, all of which have their monitor cases packed with cardboard. These include Maximum Force, Sega Touring Cars, Arctic Thunder, and Taito's original Sonic Blast Man, complete with a sign challenging people to punch harder than 130 megatons to win a bottle of whisky!

The hunt is on!

If you're on holiday this year and stumble across a retro arcade, why not jot down the details, take a few photos and send them to us? Alternatively, if you know of a similar resort to Towyn, home or abroad, please share the location with us. Send anything arcade related to **arcadehunt@retrogamer.net** and we'll compile the findings in a future issue.



Deckers, Mr Johnsons, Black ICE and Nuyen are just some of the buzzwords that excite Shadowrun fans who enjoyed these console games back in the day. But the story behind the licence is obscured by the ominous silhouette of MegaCorps, leaving ordinary Shaikujin unable to discern fact from fiction. *Retro Gamer*'s esteemed street Samurai, John Szczepaniak, invites you to sit back and read the real Paydata on the Shadowrun universe over a cup of Soykaf

Licensed games, especially those from the 8- and 16-bit eras, have a reputation for being poorly crafted and of a very low quality. Often a trademark is licensed simply to elevate an otherwise terrible game out of commercial failure by cashing in on people's familiarity with the brand. Sometimes these games have very little to do with any of the source material, so we have Arnie fighting shark-like blobs in Predator on the NES, for example.

At other times the source is used extensively, but not in a way that lends itself to good game design, leaving us with a title containing many elements that simply don't work within the framework of the game. Very rarely do they utilise the content in a way that benefits good design ethos. In short, Shadowrun videogames simply shouldn't work, particularly since the first two were RPGs of Western origin.

Right up until very recently the West simply did not know how to craft a good console RPG, which is ironic since the USA practically created the genre. Western RPGs that were effective were primarily the domain of computers – Dungeon Master and Eye of the Beholder, for example, were laborious games that despite offering more sandbox-style gameplay with a strong sense of freedom, lacked the cohesive and involving narratives offered by far more exciting Japanese-developed console RPGs. With the likes of Enix and Ape Inc creating the phenomenal Dragon Quest series and Mother games respectively, Western companies simply couldn't compete. Even the US branch of the much-loved Squaresoft could only produce the abysmal Secret of Evermore.

All this meant that when released, the Shadowrun games had double the impact – not only were they licensed products, but the first two titles were RPGs created in the West that actually matched and, to a degree, bested their Japanese contemporaries. Despite such bold claims though, the deeply convoluted origins of



the series are unknown to many players, and the licence now lies in shreds, torn apart by corporate takeovers and partial buyouts.

Paper wealth

In 1989, Shadowrun was conceptualised by several people at FASA Corporation (founded by Jordan Weisman and Ross Babcock) as a table-top, pen-and-paper RPG game. The universe of Shadowrun can be loosely described as a fusion of Tolkien-esque settings with the futuristic cyberpunk world of *Bladerunner* and Gibson's *Neuromancer* novel. Cybernetically enhanced Yakuza mercenaries brush shoulders with spell-casting elves, while Dragons populate the skies of decayed Seattle in the year 2050. But such generalisations simply can't describe just how perfectly fleshed out the narrative really is.

The back story starts in 1999 and goes right up to the mid-2060s – that's over 60 years worth of plot covering the entire planet and its many warring sub-factions. Suffice to say the storyline had a lot more depth than the average RPG of the time. As well as global coverage, it also boasted a specially created slang language and several new species of human, each with their own customs and cultures. The game even took the unprecedented step of introducing fantasy elements into a futuristic setting. But above all else, the whole thing seemed to have a grounding in reality and logic (even the magic users). It is this solid foundation that enabled the Shadowrun videogames to reach such high levels of quality and much-deserved critical acclaim.



Toward the end of the 90s, long after the Shadowrun videogames were released, FASA began to falter. In 1998, Microsoft acquired FASA Interactive (a separate branch to FASA Corporation formed in 1995, which had rights to all FASA Corporation IP on digital gaming platforms) and all rights that went with it. This meant Microsoft could make all official decisions regarding any Shadowrun computer/videogames. It was also this purchase that gave Microsoft control over the MechCommander property.

FASA Corporation finally closed its doors for good in 2001, after 25 years of successful operation despite previous shake-ups. WizKids Inc then acquired all of the intellectual property rights to Shadowrun. WizKid is, in turn, owned by Topps, manufacturer of trading cards (amongst other things). Since 2001, WizKids has been licensing out the Shadowrun pen and paper game to FanPro LL, which is based in Chicago. FanPro, meanwhile, is the sister company of Germany-based Fantasy Productions GmbH. The company is the premier publisher of Germany's equivalent to Dungeons & Dragons, and also deals with the translation and distribution of Shadowrun products in Germany, where it's hugely popular.

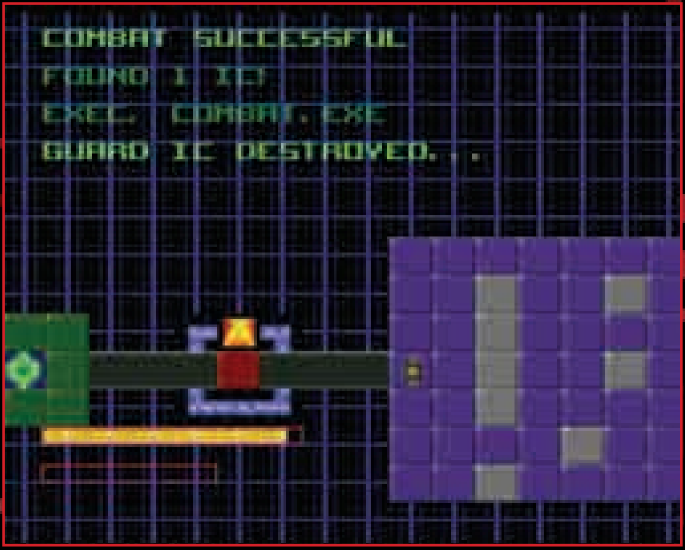
Gaming legacy

Sadly, the history of the actual videogames themselves is no less complicated – three non-sequential games were developed for three different systems by three companies and published by at least three other companies, each with their own interpretation of the Shadowrun universe and sporting wildly different gameplay mechanics. The situation is made worse by unusual, fan-made pieces of work, including a Commodore 64 game involving the collection of swords, an Australian university student's IT project, and a poor hacking game called Decker for the PC that is seemingly set in the Shadowrun world. Then there's the standard plethora of various 'inspired by' games available for the PC. Despite the promise of such Shadowrun-related videogames, only the three officially released titles are worth playing if you're a purist.

The first to be released was Shadowrun on the Super Nintendo in 1993 for the American market. It was published by DataEast and developed by Beam Software. Beam was a highly successful Australian company famous for text adventures based on Tolkien's works (such as *The Hobbit*) that were published in Europe by its local distribution arm, Melbourne House. Eventually, in 1993 it completed work on two FASA licences:



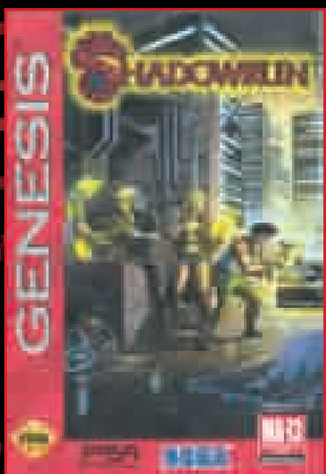




The SNES Shadowrun game debuted in the US, before being localised for and released in various European countries

Shadowrun and the first-person action game Mechwarrior, both for the SNES. Beam continued to develop other titles until 1999, when the newly named Beam International sold Melbourne House (and subsequent videogame connections) to Infogrames. Beam International went out of business entirely sometime around 2002.

A year after the initial SNES game, the Genesis version of Shadowrun was released in the US. Contrary to popular belief, the Genesis version is *not* the sequel to the SNES game and has absolutely no connection to it at all apart from the title and licensed source material. In fact, the entire design of the game is wholly different to its SNES counterpart. It was developed by Blue Sky Entertainment Inc., about which there is very little documented information (despite the fact that it developed several games). Although it received critical acclaim, the game was not released on either the European or Japanese Megadrives.



It is these two titles that have generated the most page coverage due to people's views on them. They're also a perfect example of the playground mentality that can creep into games regarding which vastly diverse version is better. The lines are clearly drawn in the sand, with both games having very vocal followers who loudly proclaim their preferred version to be superior. It must be noted that while both are very good titles in their own right, the Genesis version is regarded as more non-linear and faithful to the FASA source material. The SNES version, meanwhile, is commonly felt to have the superior and more atmospheric plotline, and certain gameplay liberties were also taken to optimise it for the SNES. Those who support the Genesis version tend to be Shadowrun purists who have followed it for years, while the SNES fans are usually regular gamers who've never heard of it before.

Diff'rent strokes

Rather than attempt to compare one with the other, the games should really be enjoyed equally on their own merits. The Genesis version's open-ended gameplay and random mission-generation system allows for almost total freedom throughout the game – some people even go so far as to compare its gang-filled cities to those of Grand Theft Auto but without vehicles. The SNES version, meanwhile, has a far more linear, though much larger game world to explore, more closely resembling traditional J-RPG designs. The one you favour depends on the kind of gaming experience you're after – the sandbox approach of the Genesis version or the defined path of the SNES game.

Both were undeniably innovative in what they did though. The Genesis game gave you the ability to save anywhere you wanted, generated random missions that actually worked well and also allowed for the heavy customisation of your character to fit with one of three different professions (mercenary, mage and decker). The SNES version, on the other hand, had a very unique and intuitive icon-driven real-time battle system that allowed you to target any object or enemy on screen, with the fluidity of a mouse pointer. It also introduced an ingenious communication system, the earliest and closest equivalent being in Final Fantasy II on the Nintendo Famicom, which allowed you to question various NPCs about any keyword you'd previously heard, and added a subtle collecting element to proceedings.

But both games also share many great traits, such as the bold visuals when interacting with different characters and the original setting that was like a breath of fresh air compared to the other more medieval-style RPGs of the time. Special mention must also be made of the dynamic music, which included a variety of genres ranging from heavy rock and techno to atmospheric ambient sounds. The atmosphere of both games was dark and foreboding, while simultaneously being familiar to those raised on other RPGs thanks to the inclusion of orcs, elves and dragons.

Neo Tokyo

The third and possibly most interesting game in the series was released on the Japanese Mega-CD in 1996 (making it not only the final Shadowrun title, but also the last sanctioned game ever to be officially released on the Mega-CD). Published by Compile, Shadowrun: Tokyo takes a completely different approach

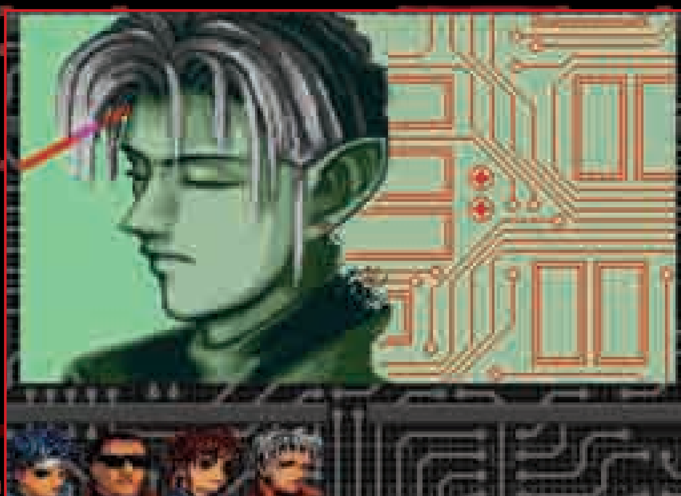






The Genesis version of Shadowrun. Compare and contrast with the earlier Super Nintendo version





The Genesis version of Shadowrun. Compare and contrast it with the earlier Super Nintendo version

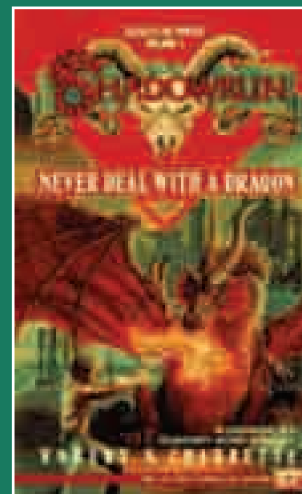


to recreating the Shadowrun world, not least because it forsakes the traditional Seattle setting in favour of Tokyo. In this game, the gritty tone of the others is merged with some truly beautiful Japanese anime styling and art direction, giving it a very unique atmosphere that's enhanced by subtle touches, such as the addition of humorous explanatory sketches in the manual.

The game is divided into four different styles of play, all of which work surprisingly well together and form a cohesive whole. The first is easily recognisable, taking the form of an interactive digital comic that plays exactly like Hideo Kojima's Snatcher. At each section you're given a beautifully drawn view of the surroundings and menu options that enable you to examine things, speak to people etc. These Snatcher-style scenes really put the Mega-CD's capabilities to good use. Occasionally, at key points, the game's truly breathtaking vistas switch to a more traditional top-down viewpoint, from which you can move the four main characters around at leisure, exploring and investigating that particular area.

It's normally from here that battles start. There are no random fights, but from this view enemies can be seen standing motionless – venture too close and a battle scene is triggered. Fights will be familiar to Mega-CD fans since they take their cue from the Shining Force strategy combat system. The screen is

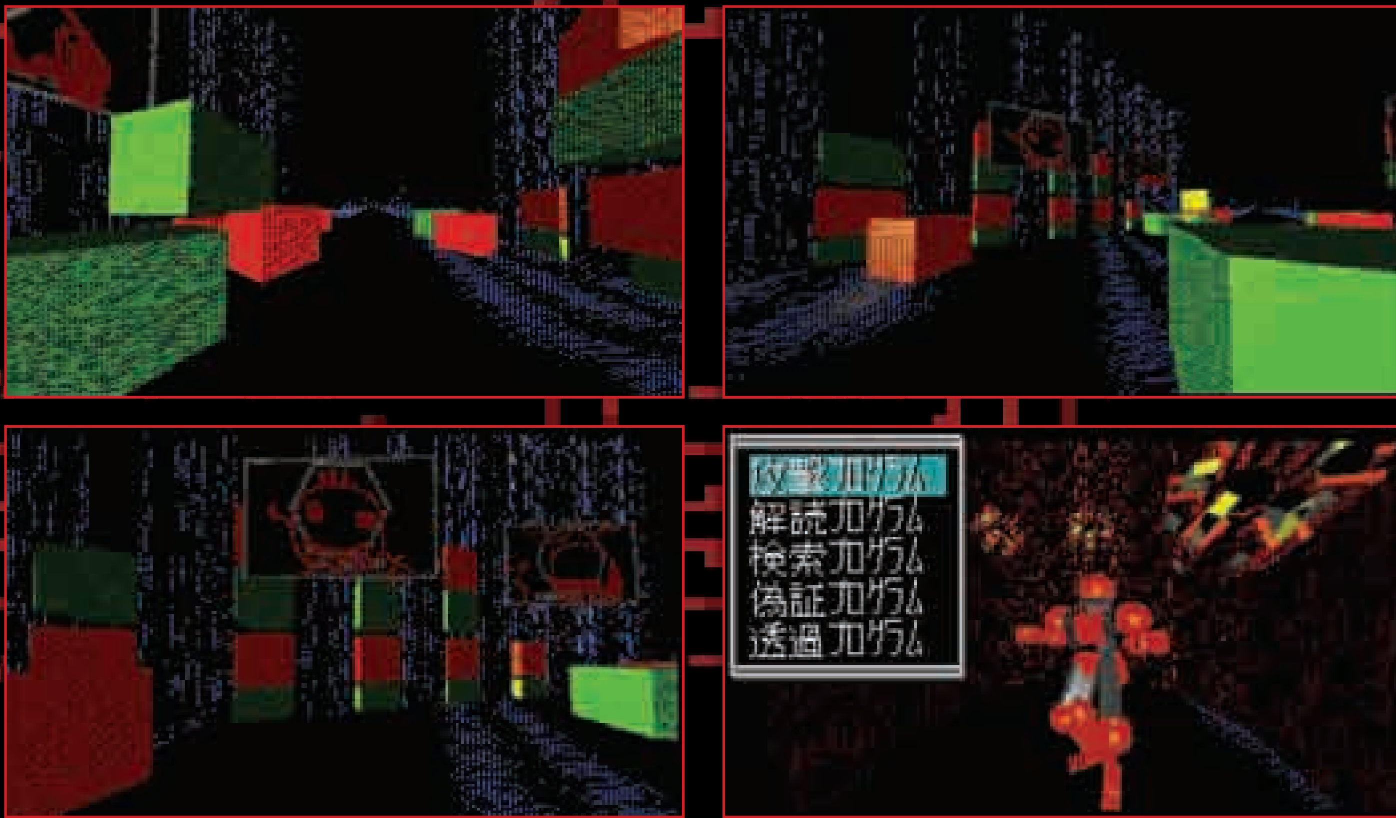
›Merchandise ahoy!



No good licence would be without its own range of increasingly unusual merchandise, and Shadowrun is no exception. It's loved internationally, so most countries have their own distinctive range of paraphernalia, especially European countries such as France and Germany. Even Japan has its own underground Shadowrun fan community. In total, approximately 150 different English language books have been printed for Shadowrun – over 40 of these are novels produced by ROC in conjunction with FASA (written by a variety of different authors). Fact hunters will be interested to know that the *Secrets of Power* trilogy was penned by Bob Charrette, who was credited in the Genesis game and was one of the co-creators of the concept way back in 1989. Fans of the videogames might be disappointed though, since the books have absolutely no connection to the games, and often no connection to each other, apart from being set in the same universe. WizKids is also officially looking into the possibility of making a Shadowrun film (not to be confused with the Shadowrun competition for short films made in Germany), but has no other news to reveal. There's also an assortment of action figures available to buy for a low price and there was even a Collectable Card Game during the mid-90s, which WizKids has no plan to re-release. Some comic/manga books were released, though only in Japan.







Hacking into the Matrix and searching for data files can be a dangerous pastime

divided into an invisible grid with a preset diamond shape for movement, and each character takes it in turns to move, then perform an action. Mao the street Shaman can cast magic, while the rest of the characters rely on a range of guns to do the job. Selecting Shoot brings up a reticule that also has a diamond-shaped range of movement relevant to your position – this is then used to highlight the chosen enemy. The key element that affects these attacks is the dice system, which is a throwback to the old table-top Shadowrun game. Anywhere between four and ten dice are rolled, stopping only after several button presses. Quite what effect each number rolled has on the outcome of the attack is never made clear, and the results seem almost random at times, making the urge to switch this off quite strong. Battles can occasionally frustrate since the Mega-CD version has more stats that need to be managed than either of the other games – the weapons alone have close to a dozen slots and numbers that affect performance. Fights are thankfully infrequent and easily avoided most of the time. They also have little affect on your overall status or money earned for the mission.

Enter the Matrix

The final portion of gameplay is made up of the Matrix-hacking sections (in Shadowrun, the Matrix is the equivalent of the Internet, and the term was coined long before anything the Wachowski bothers created). Here, *Retro Gamer* can bring you something of an exclusive, since no magazine outside Japan has ever covered this section of the game.

Regular exploration in safe communication hubs is handled much like the earlier Snatcher sections, but instead of hand-drawn surroundings you are faced with some very crudely rendered CG images. The combat sections, played during actual hacking missions, are similar to those in the Genesis version. The sprite-based visuals are replaced by constantly running FMV showing a first-person view of your character moving through the computer system, until it either comes across security forces or the much-sought after data stores. Security attacks are also handled in much the same way, providing a menu from which you can select actions, and choose various attack and defence programs to use against them. Unfortunately, the CG-rendered FMV used in these sections is some of the worst looking found on the Mega-CD, with poor compression and a low resolution. The sections are enjoyable to play though and are separated by various other parts of the game.

The real beauty of the game though lies not in the sum of its parts, but in the way it tackles various design concepts. There are no random fights and, in turn, no money is earned from the pre-scripted ones. Instead, the game is divided into chapters, with each chapter being a single 'Shadowrun' or mission that needs accomplishing. After completing (or in some cases, failing) the mission, you're given



time to regroup at the Silvermoon bar, count your pay (if the mission was successful), then proceed to the cybernetic, magic and weapons stores to gear up for the next 'run'. Access is also granted to the 'info-net' to view news stories that develop in-game, which sometimes aids the completion of a given mission. Phone calls can also be made to local contacts for info or to buy special pass codes and other relevant material. All of this gives you a feeling of control over the situation, and every mission has multiple choice paths that can fundamentally affect how that mission progresses. Players are often faced with the choice of either: talking or blasting their way through an NPC encounter; breaking into a building and fighting security or stealing a pass card and sneaking in; hacking files from a computer or bribing someone to give them to you. These subtle touches may not seem important in the greater scheme of things but they go some way to alleviating the problems of linearity found in such games.

Unfortunately, few people outside Japan will ever get to experience Shadowrun: Tokyo unless they buy it on import. The good news though, is that it has been officially confirmed that it works with the invaluable Mega-CD patching program ConvSCD (**www.retrodev.com**), meaning anyone who has the game and a little technical skill with CD burners can make a new patched version that will run on their locally bought Mega-CD machine. Of course, this doesn't solve the problem of the language barrier, since at least a basic knowledge of Japanese will be required for inventory management and weapons upgrades. There is hope on the horizon though, since there has been some talk among translation groups of creating an English language patch much like those available for other Japanese RPGs. The more interest people pay in the game, the more likely it is that fan groups will make the effort to translate it. Considering the incredibly high quality of other fan translations (and the ongoing translation of other CD-based games, such as Policenauts), which in some cases are superior to the official ones produced by bigger corporations, it's highly possible that someday gamers will be able to patch their own Shadowrun CD to run in English on non-Japanese systems.

Silent running

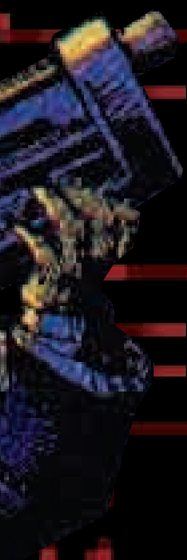
The Shadowrun trilogy is a shining example of good game design and the ability to put a licence to amazing use. Perhaps no other licence before it has ever managed to do such justice to the source material while also creating something that keeps games fans happy. All three titles are worth tracking down by retro enthusiasts and RPG gamers especially since the first two in the series can be bought reasonably cheaply second-hand.

But what of the future of Shadowrun games? The answer isn't clear, as Microsoft now owns all rights to the game series. This means any compilations containing the three games might only appear on the Xbox or its successor. It also greatly lowers the chances of the appearance of handheld ports that fans have been demanding, as Microsoft is notorious for tightly holding onto its owned licences. And, of course, there's the fact that the companies that originally made these games no longer exist.

As for the future release of Shadowrun games, there's been many a rumour floating around on the Internet. Some people have suggested that because of Microsoft's attempted acquisition of the trademark it will be developing a Shadowrun title for the Xbox much as it did with Crimson Skies. One of the more persistent rumours (coming, in one instance, from a semi-reliable source) is that an updated Shadowrun game is being worked on and will launch alongside Xbox 2, with everyone from Bungie and Day 1 Studios to FASA itself being touted as the developer. However, like all exciting rumours, they're based on very little fact.

Which means that as its name suggests, this licence is likely to remain forgotten in the shadows of MegaCorps. At least for the time being.

Special thanks to Rob Boyle for his invaluable assistance and also FASA, FanPro and WizKids for their help. For further reading and information take a look at **www.shadowrunrpg.com** *and* **www.wizkidsgames.com**.





GTW
GAMES THAT WEREN'T

Frank Gasking returns to the gaming graveyard, exhuming more games that were doomed to an early death. This month goes to prove that licences don't always do the business, and that the timing of your classic sequel can be crucial...

Daffy Duck

Hi-Tec Software, 1992, C64/Spectrum/Amstrad/Amiga/ST/PC



This rare promotional poster was obtained by *RG* contributor Mat Allen. (Artwork Copyright© Warner Bros.)

Back in the day, Hi-Tec Software was the king of cartoon-licensed games. Deals with Warner Bros. and Hanna-Barbera led to superb cartoon conversions at a budget price. Hi-Tec secured Daffy Duck for an arcade adventure subtitled 'The Great Paint Caper', and although the game was advertised for release on several formats, the only version that made the press was for the Commodore 64 (coded by Dave Saunders, with graphics by Andy Routeledge and music by Gerard Gourley).

Featuring seven slickly designed levels, Daffy had to visit a film studio, a sewer, a desert, a farmyard, a city, a forest and finally the planet Mars. The game was graphically impressive – Daffy was perfectly animated and he had access to a range of different costumes (such as a spacesuit for the Mars level). Other Warner Bros. characters also featured, including Bugs Bunny and Road Runner, and Daffy would have to interact with them in order to solve puzzles. Each level posed many problems – mazes of doors, electric force fields, floating platforms, hidden objects, missing eggs and deadly aliens on Mars. Daffy had to deal with all these whilst jumping on various creatures to temporarily stun them.

Zzap!64 magazine reviewed the C64 version, describing the game as nothing revolutionary or tough, but excellently implemented with simple controls and gameplay. Incentives were discovering new levels and meeting new characters. The magazine awarded the game 94%.

Tragically, as many prepared to splash out, Hi-Tec crashed out of the software market. A promised financial package never materialised, leading to severe cash flow problems and, in the end, Hi-Tec simply ran out of money. Although some titles were salvaged by other publishers, Daffy Duck was canned before reaching stores.

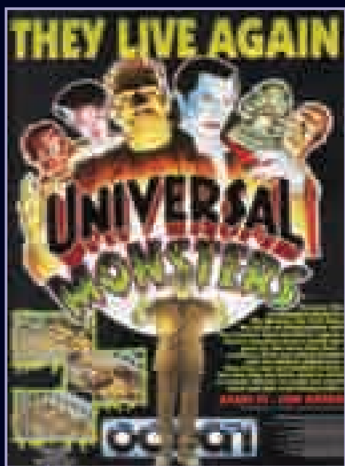
For years, attempts were made to find Daffy but to no avail. Recently, however, Hi-Tec's director Dave Palmer has surprised everyone by revealing he has the C64 master disks and associated artwork. Could Daffy really make his way onto screens at last? There are obstacles to overcome, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. We'll just have to wait with breath baited.





Universal Monsters

Ocean Software, 1992, Amiga/ST



It seemed that Ocean was always announcing yet another film licence, so when manager Gary Bracey asked artist Simon Butler to design an original concept, he jumped at the chance. Simon, a huge Ultimate fan, began producing a Knightlore-inspired isometric game, something he always wanted to do. The Inspectre was born, with a Ghostbusters-style hero ridding a large spooky mansion of various ghosties. "But as with all best laid plans, a spanner comes along and gets thrown into the works," Simon proclaims.

With the 50th anniversary of Universal Studios looming, Ocean felt that there was an opportunity for some kind of licensing deal. The team now had to transform Inspectre into Universal Monsters. As a result, the main character became more like Indiana Jones, while the ghosts turned into Dracula, Wolfman, Frankenstein, The Mummy and other ghoulish characters.

Simon and Martin MacDonald provided imprssive artwork, including well-drawn monsters and isometric backdrops. Mike Halsall was the brains behind the coding, while Barry Leitch wrote his first music score for Ocean. Universal made work difficult by requesting that characters were lifelike, so sprites and tiles were stretched as a result. Instead of static screens, the game scrolled in four directions to cope with the larger graphics, which worked brilliantly. Amiga magazine *The One* released a playable preview on its February 1993 coverdisk, showing a very promising game. However, over-complicated tiles created a confusing perspective at times, making jumps rather difficult to achieve.

After two years in development, Mike began to struggle with the code and eventually threw in the towel with the game 90% complete (he later left Ocean for Software Creations). Simon attempted to finish the code, but to no avail. Ocean then stepped in and cancelled the title. "It was a series of bad decisions that turned a simple idea into an unworkable mess," Simon recalls. Maybe the original concept would have worked better for Ocean had it been left alone.

Apart from the preview, a beta version (claimed to be the full version) also did the rounds. Is there more to find? The ST version perhaps? Mike Halsall is probably the last hope for those searching for it, but for now the preview is all that remains...

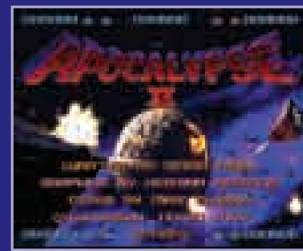




If you're eager to see Universal Monsters in action, don't miss the five minutes of video footage on our cover CD

Apocalypse II

Nintendo, 1997, SNES



Ten years after Mega Apocalypse, the awesome Mad Planets conversion, original author Simon Nicol planned a sequel for the Super Nintendo. Apocalypse II was born – a game best described as a one- or two-player mixture of Gyruss and Asteroids. You had to destroy waves of planets that hurtled along and grew in size if you didn't manage to shoot them soon enough.

Looking at the sequel, visuals are the obvious enhancement over the original, with Herman Serrano producing excellent graphics to modernise proceedings. The main ship looks and animates extremely well, and planets are larger and far deadlier than before. Mike Clarke's great remix of Rob Hubbard's classic tune brings back memories, and sound effects are faithful with the original speech effects retained and enhanced. However, not a lot was added to the formula. Besides a new shield-based power-up and various other tweaks, the only real changes were to the sound and graphics. Could more have been added? Maybe, but its original appeal remains, and clocking up high scores has never been more fun.

One thing you may find is that the game is harder than the original. Planets are much larger, so when four or five swarm onto the screen, it's almost impossible to survive. Planets also continue to swell when you lose lives (a bit mean!) and we can imagine more than a few SNES controllers being thrown at the TV.

Although Apocalypse II was 100% complete and ready for release, by 1997 the SNES was a dying breed. The Nintendo 64 and PlayStation were beginning to dominate and no one wanted to publish SNES titles anymore.



Simon was left with a complete game that would go to waste.

Simon did plan to release the game as shareware, allowing gamers to play Apocalypse II via emulation, but this never happened. Maybe Simon will one day put the idea into action and finally release the game to the world. For now, check out the video clip on the coverdisc to see what you're missing.



The fast and frantic Apocalypse II was sadly denied a release on the aging SNES

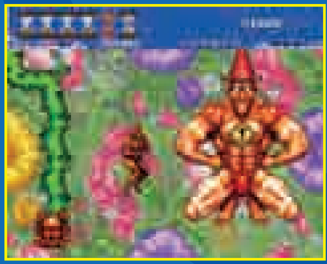
STRANGE GAMES

There's no easy way to describe NCS's Chou Aniki series to Westerners. It's easy for the Japanese because they have a word for everything: they can simply label a game 'kuso-ge' and it falls neatly into a category. This term doesn't have any connotations in our society, but the direct translation does offer a certain indication of what to expect: 'shit games'. Per Arne Sandvik gets his hands good and dirty…

There are games that are inadvertently bad, and there are games that gleefully dive into their own rubbishness and splash about. The Chou Aniki games are part of the latter category. The more the elements clash and the wilder the graphics, the better.

NCS's first game in the series, released in 1992 for the PC Engine, was a Gradius-like shooter simply called Chou Aniki. The title roughly translates to 'Super Big Brother', a somewhat puzzling name that doesn't in any way describe the content of the game. Compared to the later entries, this one is relatively straightforward and tame, with two characters: the male Ideran and female Benran. The pair fly through outer space shooting down spaceships and other enemies.

Then came the 1995 sequel Ai Chou Aniki ('Love Super Big Brother'). At this point, the rusty lock keeping tons of phallic imagery from crashing down on the world of videogames shattered into a million pieces, and rising from the genitalian rubble were the twin brothers Adon and Samson. Gone were main characters Ideran and Benran, giving way to the strongman siblings who were out to shake things up and never stop.





Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the wonderful world of Chou Aniki, and the beefcake brothers Adon and Samson

Brothers in arms

The brothers have a somewhat odd fighting style. Basically, they fly through space wearing nothing but thongs and shooting globs of white fluid through holes on top of their bald, glistening heads. To perform special attacks, they buff themselves up by flexing their muscles until they release a stream of deadly discharge from the aforementioned blowholes. To turn subtext into text: they are anthropomorphications of the male genitalia. Erect ones. Their enemies follow in the same suit: giants wearing nothing but jock straps and traffic cones; pirate spaceships manned by tiny naked space pirates; and to drive the point home, male couples rolling around with their faces buried in each others' crotches.

Also released in 1995 was the Super Famicom title Chou Aniki: Bakaretsu Rantouden, which translates as either 'Strange Battle Explosion' or possibly

›Fight for food

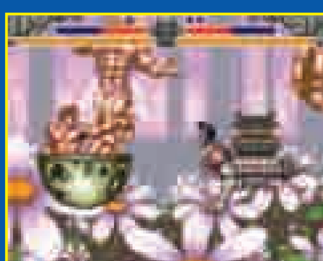
If you feel there's simply not enough Chou Aniki in the world, Winds' Gourmet Sentai Bara Yarou for the Super Famicom might be your ticket to happiness. This is a beat-em-up in the tradition of Double Dragon, only Double Dragon doesn't have floating robot heads that bite your crotch, mechanical Tanuki raccoons with impressive, erm, tails, or flying cyborg wasp-people who inject you with liquids from their groin syringes.

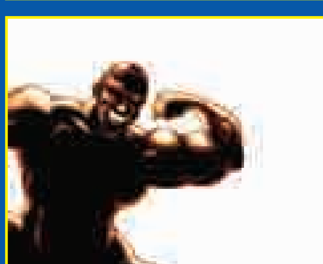
Strange enemies aside, this fun but relentless game is somewhat conventional gameplay-wise, except for the fact that enemies drop groceries when you defeat them. After each level, a giant robotic chef will let you pick two ingredients and make you a delicious candlelit dinner. Salads give you the most health, but you can also have him prepare a tasty turkey platter. Or, if you feel like it, you can simply have a big bowl of raw flour or a pound of margarine.



'Legend of the Silly Oval Tombstone Edge' (Japanese is notoriously difficult to translate). Unlike the previous releases, this is a one-on-one fighting game in the Street Fighter vein, except all the characters fly and most have a distinct homoerotic quality. Ideran and Benran, the original main characters, return, as do the brothers. The other members of the character gallery are either newly invented or are bosses from previous games. They include Adam, a naked man with half a meteor for a vehicle and a cannon for a penis, Mami19 the human star ship (complete with a crew consisting of tiny naked acrobats), and Sabu. Sabu is a centaur-like creature, with a Japanese temple mounted on a rocket engine replacing the horse part and half a robotic Elvis Presley in front. He has a hatch in his abdomen which releases a scissor lift with a boot attached, and another hatch on his roof which sometimes displays a tiny dancing geisha. 'Peculiar' doesn't quite cover it.

Bakaretsu Rantouden is actually a pretty fun fighter once you get past the oddness of the characters. Of course, you also have to deal with the backgrounds, which range from pink flowery meadows with naked dancing pixie giants, a railway station with passing trains consisting of man-shaped carts linked in an endless chain, and a temple with, again, naked giants thrusting their pelvises downwards. There are also some odd attacks that don't seem to actually do





Chou Aniki migrated onto the Super Famicom, but the all-round weirdness remained intact



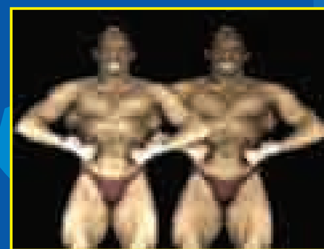
Hold onto your monocles – the series minces its way onto the PlayStation

anything, like the aforementioned geisha or Samson's hip swings whose only function seems to be to make you dizzy and open to attack. It's still a pretty good game though.

Pretty as a picture

A year later, the first Chou Aniki was remade for the PlayStation, this time under the name Chou Aniki: Kyuukyoku Muteki Ginga Saikyou Otoko ('Ultimate Invincible Milky Way's Strongest Man'). There was also a Saturn version that added the words 'Counter Attack' to the already mind-bending title for good measure. This outing followed Mortal Kombat's example by using digitised graphics, much to the dismay of the more squeamish among us. Considering that the boss of the first level is a giant naked man, sporting a comb-over and wearing a metal nappy, who attacks by bashing you with his man-shaped penis while writhing in agony, the photorealistic graphics could be a bit too much.

But the Chou Aniki dream still wasn't dead. Another game, Chou Aniki: Otoko no Tamafuda (probably 'Man with Medallion') was released for the handheld WonderSwan, and once again Samson, Adon and the rest of the characters spread their wings (and legs) and made their way into yet another genre. Otoko no Tamafuda is a Final Fantasy-esque RPG adventure, and this shift in style makes it very hard to get into for those of us who don't read Japanese. By walking into buildings and talking to people randomly you'll find some exotic locations like a men's portable toilet (it



seems the gents at the urinals are too busy to help you out though), and you can participate in card-game duels. It would appear that the way to succeed in this game is to win all these duels.

And beyond

Moving from the past to the present day, another title was recently released for the PS2. The suggestively titled Chou Aniki: Seinaru Protein Densetsu ('Legend of the Holy Protein') is yet another shooter, and it looks absolutely terrible considering the system's power. We've never had a chance to play this particular title, but with its lava-urinating blindfolded giants, walking sharks and cosmic streams of many naked men cradling each other it's safe to say that little has changed.

So, what does the future have in store for Chou Aniki? It seems like there is a market for this particular piece of kuso-ge, so the motley crew may very well make an appearance on the next Sony console. On the other hand, the official webpage has disappeared completely. Could this be the end of Samson and friends? Only time will tell. Until then, we can all take comfort in the fact that they're out there somewhere, defending the Earth from giant robot crotches.

eMag

Feel the Force

To complete this issue's Nintendo coverage, we present a little piece of Newsfield history in the form of *Nintendo Force*, a magazine that never made it off the starting block. But *Retro Gamer* has uncovered a review of Probotector written for the unpublished magazine, and we have the great pleasure of including it here for your perusal – 14 years after it was originally written and laid out

In the late summer/early autumn of 1991, Newsfield was in trouble. The publisher, which had turned the UK games magazine market on its head in the mid-80s with classic titles like *Crash* and *Zzap!64*, was struggling to survive in an increasingly competitive market. But rather than going down with a whimper, Newsfield began fighting a rearguard action with two planned launches aimed at the emerging console market. *Sega Force* and *Nintendo Force* were due to hit the shelves in October. The publisher even went as far as hiring extra reviewing staff to work on the new titles.

Alas, it was not to be. On 17 September 1991, the company went bust, with neither magazine anywhere near completion.

Picking up the pieces

When Impact Magazines rose from the ashes of Newsfield, the management bought up the rights to Newsfield's profitable titles, and also to *Sega Force*, which had yet to launch. *Nintendo Force* was abandoned due to legal threats from Nintendo, which was at the time very restrictive regarding third-party products, and that included unofficial magazines. Later in the day, Future Publishing broke Nintendo's stranglehold on third-party magazines with the release of *Total*, and Impact followed suit by releasing *N-Force*.

So where do these scans fit in? Well, they're an unfinished review from the magazine that would've been *Nintendo Force*, written by Will Evans (who is also credited with writing a review in *Zzap!64* issue 78, the last Newsfield-published issue of the magazine). The review was laid out in August 1991 just before the bomb dropped.

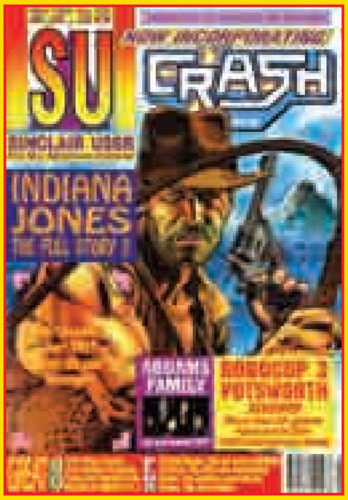
Sadly, the review is unfinished (several boxouts and captions are missing), but it gives a very good idea of what the ill-fated *Nintendo Force*, and its sister publication *Sega Force*, would have looked like. You'll notice the layout bears little resemblance to the console magazines eventually published by Impact. It's far more cute and cuddly, an approach abandoned at some point between Newsfield's collapse and Impact's emergence.

These scans are almost certainly the only copies in existence, so here for the very first time is a glimpse of Newsfield's long-lost *Nintendo Force* magazine. Enjoy! ››››

End of the line

As you probably know, Europress bought up most of Newsfield's assets and formed Europress Impact. But what happened to the popular magazines like *Crash* and *Zzap!64*? Well, Impact continued to publish a further five issues of *Crash*, before it was sold to Emap and rather crudely incorporated into issue 123 of *Sinclair User* (*SU* finally closed in April 1993, presumably taking *Crash* with it).

Zzap!64 fared slightly better, as Impact continued to publish the title, changing its name to *Commodore Force* in December 1992 to fall in line with Europress Impact's other games magazines like *Sega Force* and *Amiga Force*. In March 1994, Impact itself went into receivership, with the last issue of *Commodore Force* being #16. What happened to *Commodore Force/Zzap!64* after that is not entirely clear, although various online sources suggest it was snapped up by Future Publishing. Regardless, *Zzap!64* lives on with the release of issue 107, created by fans of the magazine. It's available as a free download (in PDF format) from www.zzap64.co.uk.



Crash was incorporated into former rival *Sinclair User*, but this was really little more than a branding exercise



The last issue of *Zzap!64* before Impact renamed the magazine *Commodore Force*

TEST FORCE

PROBO

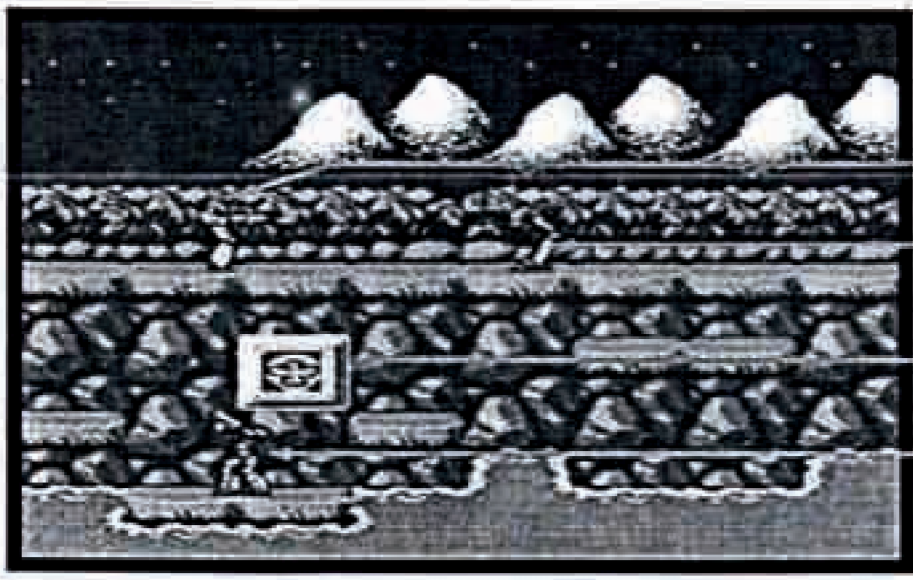
W I L L
PICTURE

It's 'hello!' 2633 AD. The year when technology has reached a level so advanced that nature and science exist in harmony, and peace and love rule the world! 'Blimey!' pipes WILL EVANS, 'it sounds like a hippy dream to me!' But it isn't...

Yes gamers, all's not well in the future. Beneath the peace and calm lurks something beyond imagination, threatening mankind's very existence! Again. During some routine, run of the mill top secret research, scientists discover an alien from the Galaxy of Apocalypse (sinister eh?), and it's plotting to wipe out the human race (the bounders!).

To protect the planet, two wonderful combat robots are created. Probotector (cue: gasp in awe!). The RD008 and RC011 are designed to be big, mean and nasty to aliens. Their mission is to find the alien's fortress in the Galga isles and give it a good seeing to (six of the best with a laser gun and all that).

And so there you are, (or both of you are if

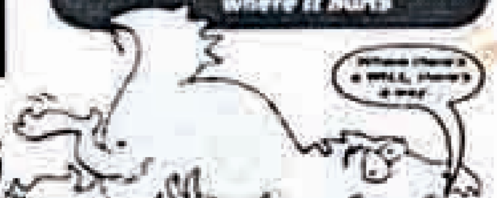


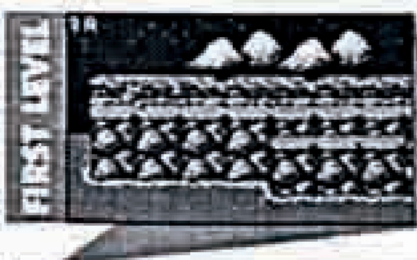
Here he is: saviour of the planet and all-round gallant hero, Probotector (ie, you)

This is one of the opposition's robots — the one that bears an uncanny resemblemence to ED-209

An upgrade dispenser — shoot it when the doors open to unleash the power-up icon

A mean blue baddie with gun aloft and about to shoot you where it hurts



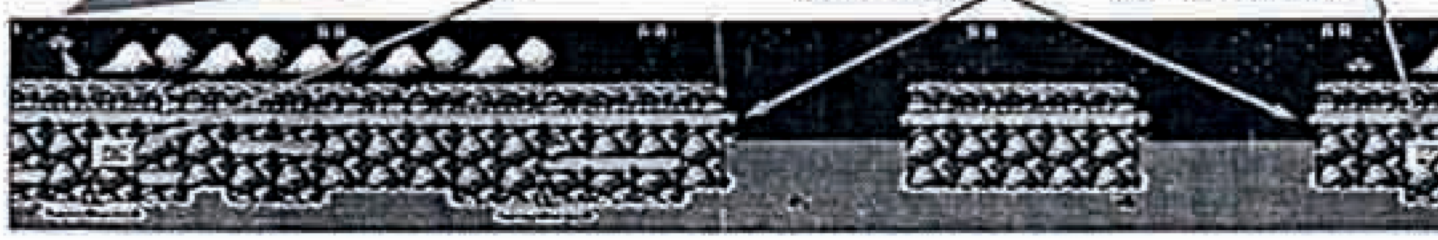


WILL'S PROGRESS...
(or how easy it is to die!)

Zap these pill boxes for extra firepower, and watch out for the overhead capsules too!

Exploding bridges — cross by continually jumping to the right, but you usually end up in the water!

These gun turrets take lots of shots to take out. They turn quite slowly, so it's best to just run past them.



XXX

tector

you're playing a two player game) dropped in the middle of the Galga isles with only a small (but perfectly formed) hand gun to protect yourself. Only one thing for it, time to waste alien spawn! Pick up a few gun upgrades and get on with finding the inevitable big end-of-level opponent.

Gunning on Galaga

Probotector's first level involves running along in the jungle, shooting two-legged robots who might be called [illegible] in 200 — get my drift, eh?) and shooting blue robots who look a bit like you. It is, indeed, an orgy of destruction and I'm revelling in it.

And doesn't it look familiar? Why, I'd say it bears a striking resemblance to that golden oldie *Gryzor* from Konami. As this is by Konami, too, I'd go as far as to say that it was *Gryzor* renamed with a few new features. Fine if you haven't got *Gryzor*, a bit crap if you have.

Several weapons capsules can be collected to aid your task, bumping up defence and offence: armoury, machine gun, laser gun, fireball, rapid bullets, spray gun, force field and a useful mass destruction globe. They're either carried in a flying capsule and dropped when shot or ejected from a metallic hole in the ground when shot. Most of the hassle involves running after them as they fly about the screen.

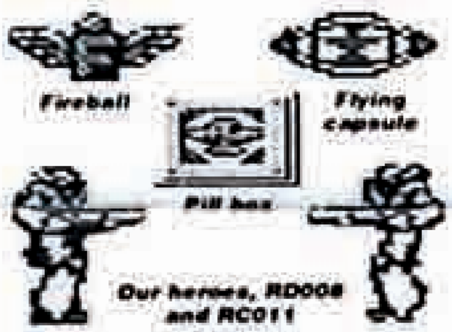
They're all worth getting apart from fireball. It has two bullets that orbit each other and usually manage to miss everything else onscreen. Laser gun is the most deadly, felling even mighty armoured guns with only a couple of blasts. Still, they don't make things much easier to [illegible].

Eight levels (or 'lines of defense') you will kick off with the horizontally scrolling jungle. The second is a 3D section, called Base 1, where you shoot the enemy across a squash court fixed with laser bars. Level three is the waterfall, and it's pretty similar to level one, but harder. Level four is another 3D section much like level two but — you guessed it — harder.

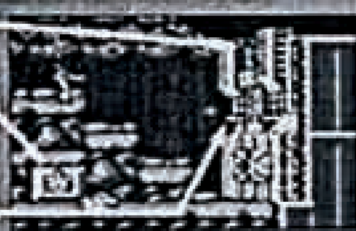
They go on like this with small changes but not much variety until level eight, the Alien's Lair (Not Not Not the Alien's Lair). Another horizontal bit where you face none other than the Alien from the Galaxy of Apocalypse himself. You can either ask him what the weather is like up there and get your head bitten off (must be rainy) or go at him like a man, with guns blazing and jaw jutting.

The graphics are great, with small but superbly detailed sprites and metallic shading abounds. The backgrounds are good too, level one's water is just a blue mass, but this is made up for by the rocks with typical rocky shading done very well. The end of level nasty isn't too wonderful — it looks like the side of a metal building spitting bombs — but there you go, you can't have everything.

Level two's graphics aren't as nice but function



Yikes! It's the end of level one!



It's the funky squash court bit!



More of the same here. Beware the snipers hiding in the bushes at the top of the screen — and keep firing for all you're worth!

To deal with this oddity, jump onto the platform to

its left and fire lying down. Aims and shoots faster than standard turrets, so don't run past it if you can help it.

Shoot pill box, jump from here to collect Time icon. Watch out for robots appearing from the right.

Overlaps to next page



well (apart from right-on invisible bullets). Playing, you hardly notice them, it's so blooming hard! Sound isn't so wonderful though, limited to a few unimaginative spot fx and a basic tune. The best bit is the shooting/exploding sound on the title screen.

Not new, but fun!

The gameplay's nothing new: basic Gryzor running and shooting on these levels and simple dodging and shooting on the 'squash' court screens. The strategy on said screens is to play each one a couple of times so you remember where to stand so's not to get shot. Many goes are needed to get past them all, but the continue option helps with this (especially as you start from the beginning of the level you died on) so you get into a routine.

Probotector is very hard and only gets easier after you've played it a few hundred times. Still, it is playable and I could see myself playing late into quite a few nights.

I can't really see the point in giving *Gryzor* a new name and a couple of new sprites because it's an oldie that wasn't too new first time round. Still, it's a really professional version, with nice arcade-style graphics and as much playability as you could expect from such a theme. It's really like having the arcade in your bedroom, but old and not so great compared with today's stuff.

Will Evans

INSTANT ACCESS:

MARK

Like its predecessor, *Gryzor*, *Probotector* is pretty tough to beat because the enemy robots take their task very seriously. Things are made a bit easier in two-player mode, but then it's usually a race to see who can get to the weapon power-ups quickest! Graphically the game's impressive, backdrops colourful and varied, robot characters yomping around purposefully on their mission with minimal flicker as the screen scrolls. Sonically, it's pretty impressive, too, at least in the music, with title and in-game toe-tapping tunes. If you can bear the infuriating first few goes, *Probotector* is worthy of consideration. 79%

FIRST PLAY: '...wants to make you play on'

RICH

Addiction's the name of the game with *Probotector*. Its simplistic nature at the beginning wants to make you play on and on and see a bit more of the scenery. It's not too difficult to trash the opponents and bash your way to the end of level one (I managed that first go), but completing a level successfully (as you make the most of the power-up icons) is where most difficulty lies: getting on the right platforms at the right time while avoiding an opponent and all that. Instantly, *Probotector* is fun, because the gameplay's traditional, so you don't have to spend long on each part of the level working out what's best to do at each point. However (before this comment goes over the top on the 'instantly attractive' front), I reckon I'd tire of the gameplay before long — it's too old hat to be thoroughly challenging.



N.E.S. CHECK OUT

Probotector

KONAMI — PROGAMES RELEASE NOW XXXXX XXXXX

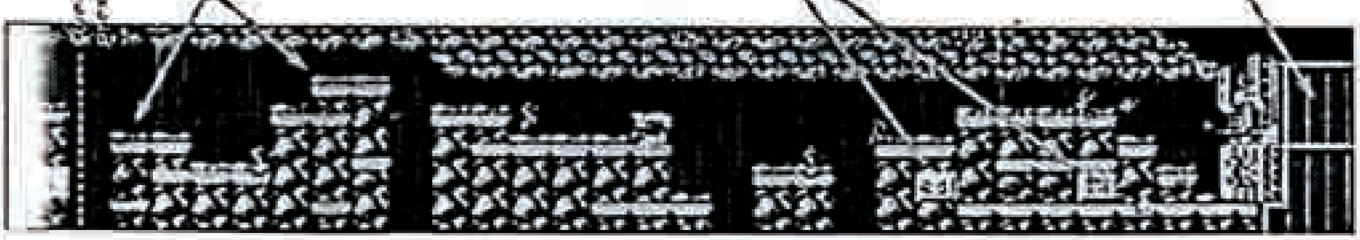
30.63	PRESENTATION	Reasonable title screen with quite a few options	70
Hardish	GRAPHICS	Detailed sprites, shaded backgrounds, good animation	85
2	SONICS	Average title tune with fine spot fx	67
2	PLAYABILITY	Limited run 'n' blast action, but lots of fun	80
3	LASTABILITY	Frustratingly hard at times, but you keep coming back	84
GREAT	V.F.M.	If standard arcade combat gameplay appeals, invest in it	60



This is where you get to practise changing direction in mid-air. Bit of a pain at first, but you soon get the hang of it.

It's best to detroy these turrets, or they'll be a severe hassle to you at the end of the level.

This is it — the end-of-level fortress that leads to the first base. To find out more about how to get past it, see the TIPS SECTION.



eMag

Retro Scene

The latest news and releases from the retro gaming community

CGE alive and kicking

New date and venue announced



We hope your calendar is one of the plastic wipe-clean kinds, because the date of the second Classic Gaming Expo has moved once again. Originally to take place at the end of July, the show was shifted back to the beginning of September in order to tie in with the Game Zone Live consumer event. Then, for reasons we don't really understand (although the finger was inevitably pointed at EA, as is the tradition these days), Game Zone Live recently slipped limply into the Thames. But thank the Lord – or failing that, CGE organiser Chris Millard (pictured) – the show was saved from a watery grave and will now be held at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, on 13 August 2005.

However, unlike last year's show, the event will take place on a single Saturday rather than over the weekend. "Better one day than not at all," Chris told us, "and we're going to make sure that the day goes with a bang. Loads of special guests are lined up and the show will run later into the evening this year." Talking of special guests, Matthew Smith will be returning, Bullfrog's Andy Nuttal will be there, and it's hoped earlier confirmed guests (Archer Maclean, Jeff Minter and the lads from Ocean) will be able to make the re-arranged date. More guests are to be unveiled in the coming weeks... In fact, just as we were going to press, it was announced that Gary Whelan, holder of the Galaxian world record, will be attempting to beat his own high score of 399,920 at the show.

Chris is confident that CGE 2005 will be bigger and better than last year's successful debut. Last time, 1,200 people visited and it's hoped that three or four times that amount will flock to Fairfield Halls this year. Cancel your summer holiday, bring your family along, convince your mates to come too. Chris and the CGE need your support!

Tickets will be available shortly. For the latest information, visit the website at **www.cgeuk.com**.





Rockford returns

Boulder Dash arrives on the 5200



Fans of Boulder Dash are in for a treat thanks to retro gaming website **www.atari2600.com**. The site is selling Atari 5200 carts of Boulder Dash II: Rockford's Revenge by First Star Software (whose recent PC compilation is reviewed this month).

The sequel to the massively popular original title introduced new caves to explore and more two-player madness. It originally ran on Atari's 8-bit home computers, but now Mean Hamster Software (**www.meanhamstersoftware.com**) has converted the game to run on the 5200, and has made it available exclusively through Atari2600.com.

The pack is a professional release, complete with full-colour cart label and instruction manual, and box. And for the collectors, the game is available in four different colours – yellow, red, black and bright pink! Boulder Dash II: Rockford's Revenge costs £40.

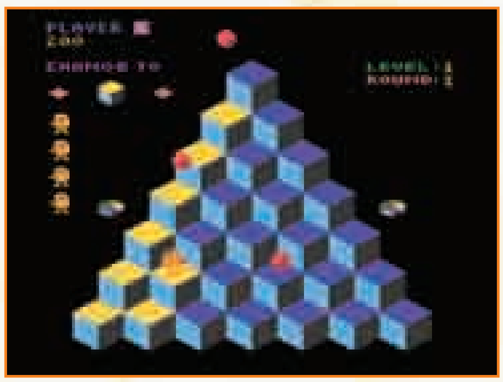
Hopping mad

Big-nosed Q*bert is back

A new release on the homebrew scene is currently under development for the Atari 7800. This port of Q*Bert is being developed by Ken Siders, who recently finished Beef Drop, a port of Burgertime. The announcement was actually an April Fool's joke originally, but Ken started to work on the project and made enough progress to consider making it for real.

The current version of the game is still in the early stages, but it already has a working title screen, as well as a complete level. The only enemies currently in the game are the red balls, which are made all the more challenging due to the increase in speed allowed on the more powerful system. This is looking very nice indeed even at this early stage, and we look forward to seeing the full version when it's completed.

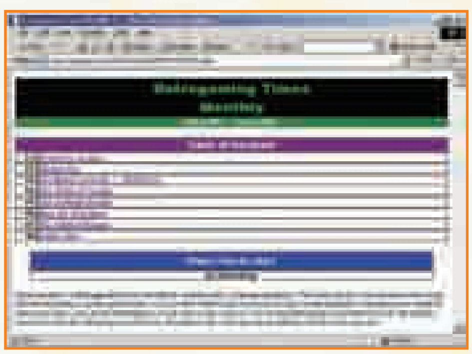




Retro news online

Roll up for your monthly dose

If you've never had the pleasure of visiting the website of *Retrogaming Times Monthly*, then you should hop on over to **http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RTM/RTM_Home.htm** and take a look at the latest edition (issue 11) of the online retro magazine edited by Adam King. The current issue contains in-depth features on Battlezone (and the many faces of the classic, now celebrating its 25th anniversary), Tetris, arcade clones, a look at some new VIC-20 releases and more. As well as the current issue, you can also rummage through the previous issues of the magazine.



EMULATION UPDATE

Atari DC

There's a brand new version of the Dreamcast's Atari ST emulator, DCaSTaway, available on the official site (**http://chui.dcemu.co.uk/dcastaway.shtml**). Marked up as a release candidate, this version packs in a large number of improvements and tweaks.

Support for MSA and ST disk images is now included, as is support for the Dreamcast's own keyboard and mouse, for that real ST feel. Zip files are now compatible and the control system has been overhauled and improved. There's even a new file manager with subdirectory access and a menu system. To get more info about this new update, or for instructions on how to get the emulator up and running, visit the website.



New Mega Dream

Emulation fans looking for a decent Megadrive emulator for the Dreamcast have been a little starved in the past, with only a few half-finished emus making it onto the Web. But now, things are set to change.

Ian Micheal (coder of such projects as Quakecast, Mamecast and NeoGeo CD, along with his fellow Cast team) has released the first version of his very own MD emulator for the DC – Gencast. This new Sega emulator promises true 100% performance in both sound and speed, and features a very impressive front-end GUI, high-resolution gaming mode (640x480), two-player support, ROM disc access (ROMs burned to a separate CD) and the ability to load games from archives. The whole thing oozes professional quality, and is compatible with a high percentage of MD games.

Finally, a decent Megadrive emulator for the DC. For more information and the download link visit **www.gencast.info**.

Cover Tapes

With more and more bands covering classic videogame tunes, Ashley Day recommends some of the more unusual examples to add to your playlist

Modern games publishers are running out of ideas – not gameplay ideas but soundtrack ideas. Many of today's publishers lazily opt to use existing pop songs to draw in the casual crowd or fill the game with dull and unobtrusive background music. There are exceptions of course but, let's face it, the days of slogging your way through a game just to hear the next stage's theme tune (Streets of Rage II-style) are long gone. There's something quite special about classic game music and it isn't just the hardcore gamers that are in the know, as an ever-increasing number of popular musicians are beginning to cover game tunes in their own style.

Listed below are four cover versions that need to be heard by any retro gamer with an ear for a decent tune.

Korobeiniki – Ozma

The Tetris theme is probably the most covered videogame tune in history. Though many of those covers are unimaginative techno interpretations, Ozma's rock rendition of the classic theme is by far the best. The tune was actually written many years before Alexy Pajitnov invented the block-puzzle genre and is traditionally named *Korobeiniki*. Ozma remain faithful to the theme's heritage by utilising the balalaika – a classical, triangular-shaped lute that is very popular in Eastern Europe. Heavy drums, fuzzy guitars and keyboard contribute a modern feel that complements the traditional sound and creates what is surely one of the best videogame covers available.

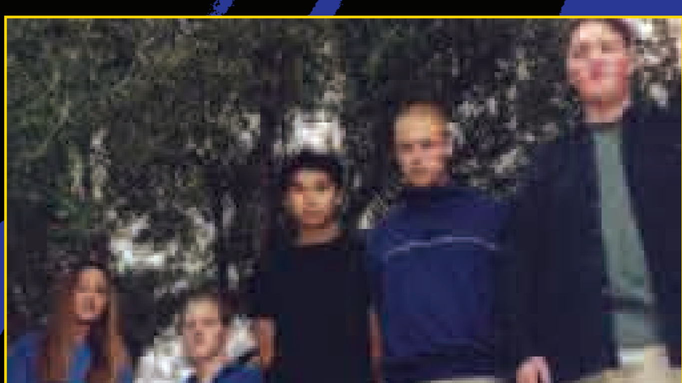
This should come as little surprise to existing Ozma fans. The Californian quintet's albums are littered with references to retro gaming, particularly the NES, which lead singer Daniel Brummel is most fond of. Mario, Luigi and Link are all name-checked along the way and Ozma's final album even includes a song called *Game Over* that compares the trials and tribulations of gaming to the ups and downs of a romantic relationship. Anyone with an affectionate interest in gaming would do well to try at least one of Ozma's albums.



Theme from Narc – Pixies

In the liner notes for *Complete B-Sides*, Pixies lead singer Frank Black writes, "Narc is a videogame about narcotics officers catching the bad guys. This is what you heard when you blew 'em away." He wasn't being entirely honest – nowhere in the Williams coin-op does anyone screech "Theme from Narc!", but we can forgive him because his version of the 1988 tune features all the excitement and tension you would expect from a Pixies song. Joey Santiago's guitar crunches through the Narc theme with a reckless glee that lesser bands would be too respectful to follow through, whilst Black's trademark screams conjure the image of a thousand drug-dealing perps being blown away by a single rocket blast.

Theme from Narc clocks in at a lean 1:48, just enough time to remind you of how good Narc was and to consider loading up Midway's Arcade Treasures 2 for a quick blast. That, of course, is the highest compliment that can be paid to any videogame cover track.





Warp to World 6-9 – Benefit

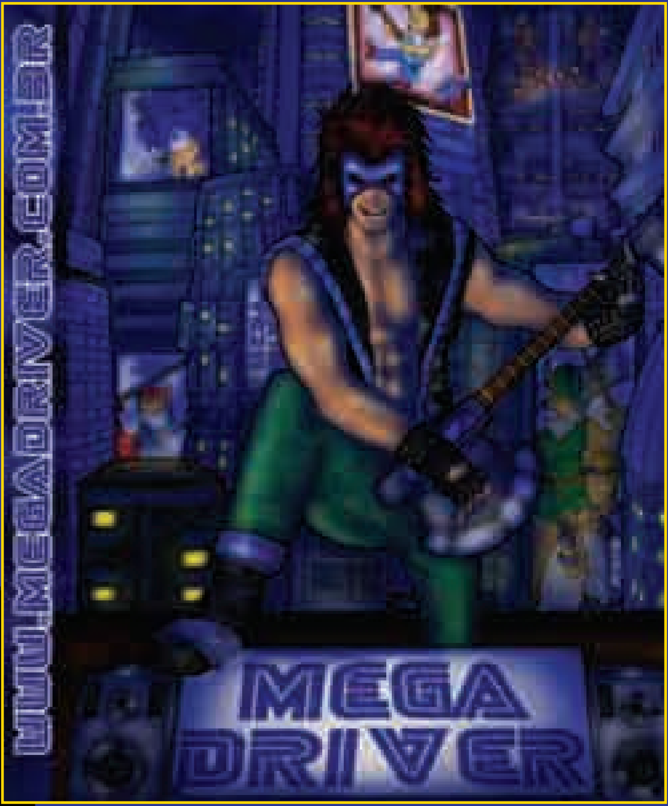
In light of Nintendo's recent legal action against the soft-porn website Suicide Girls (for tainting the family image of its products), it is extra-surprising that Benefit's *Warp to World 6-9* has gone unnoticed by the Big N. Set to a sample of the original Super Mario Bros. theme, the currently unsigned rapper recounts the tale of his six-year-old self spending the entire summer helping Mario to rescue Princess Peach so they can get up to some serious, ahem, plumbing. Koji Kondo's original theme tune provides the perfect beat for the rap, and the jingle that plays when Mario is paused is used effectively to bookend a dramatic pause in the song. What's most striking, however, is the way the song muddies the morally correct waters of the classic platformer. Benefit uses every word in the four-letter dictionary to convince us that Mario's real aim was to get Peach into the sack, and after listening to the song you'll never be able to play Super Mario Bros. again without thinking dirty things about plumbers and princesses.

Pac-Man – Powerpill

Better known as Richard D James or Aphex Twin, Powerpill released the *Pac-Man* EP in 1992 and the title track went on to become a short-lived rave hit. The track mixed the main theme from the arcade sensation with sound effects from the game and a sample of James himself saying "Pac-Man" over and over. Like all the best rave tunes it was incredibly annoying and not one of the Aphex Twin's better efforts, but it did get the pill munchers going in the early 90s and is perhaps one of the clearest examples of how well a videogame tune can be appropriated into another culture. Now it's only a matter of time before the World Cup opens to the Sensible Soccer theme tune.



›The Boys from Brazil



MegaDriver are a Brazilian metal band who are absolutely obsessed with classic videogames. Having released several 'metallized' versions of retro game theme tunes straight to their website, their presence on these pages is automatically deserved. Their contribution to the retro scene runs much deeper than a few well-played covers though, and that's where their 2004 *Metal Axe* album comes in. The album is available as a full download and expertly recreates the Golden Axe tunes in a style that suits the game perfectly. In fact, the songs fit so well that MegaDriver decided that their natural home would actually be in the game itself.

Fellow metal-gamers may wish to head over to **www.metalmame.com** where they'll be able to acquire a customised version of MAME that allows MegaDriver's new tunes to be played as an alternative soundtrack to the original arcade ROMs. *Metal Axe* works particularly well and pumps up the tempo enough to make hacking your way through Golden Axe just that little bit more satisfying.

It's worth checking out the band's main website at **www.megadriver.com.br** where other game covers can be obtained. The Street Fighter II tune *Shou Ken* would be a good start; it features a brilliant, galloping Iron Maiden-style riff and if Capcom ever gets round to making a Street Fighter IV then this tune has to be in there somewhere.



MegaDriver interview

Nino MegaDriver (real name Antonio F Tornisiello) is the lead guitarist and founder of MegaDriver. As well as being a talented musician, he is a skilled coder as his website and Metal MAME project show. Here he offers his thoughts on game music and his own covers.

Retro Gamer: What is it about videogame music that makes you want to cover it?

Nino MegaDriver: I love the games I've created remixes from. Music is one of the most important parts of a game; it's responsible for most of the emotion you feel while you play. So, in my opinion, a good game must have a great soundtrack. Just like videogames, heavy metal has been part of my life since I was a kid – I bought my first metal album when I was about 13 years old. One day I started thinking how some game music sounds so much like some heavy metal songs and how it would sound if played by a real band, with guitars, bass, drums, etc. This was how the MegaDriver project was born.

RG: In your opinion, which games have the best music and why?

NM: That's a very difficult question, but I'm a big Sega fan. Videogame music is one of the things Sega does best. Games



like Altered Beast and Golden Axe have fantastic soundtracks.

RG: What has the fan response been to your music?

NM: MegaDriver is like my hobby. I've created the songs for personal fun, but it's great to know my work is also being enjoyed by others. I'm used to receiving many messages every day from people all around the world. Most messages are compliments and requests for covering more soundtracks. This inspires me to push the project on.

RG: Tell us more about Metal MAME.

NM: Something like Metal MAME is an old dream of mine – to be able to play classic games with a new heavy metal soundtrack. I started playing with the MAME source code years ago and, when the idea came, I knew it would be possible. I started with four of my favourite games: *Metal Beast* (Altered Beast), *Metal Axe* (Golden Axe), *Metal Contra* and *Speed Metal Gyruss*.

RG: What's next for the Metal MAME project?

NM: I'm currently working on Double Dragon, but I don't have a 'Metal' name for it yet. It will be like 'Double Metal' or 'Dragon Metal' – what do you think? The programming is almost done and I've already recorded two songs. This time I'm using new recording equipment so the fans should expect better sound quality. I'm hoping to finish it all in the next few months.

1UP HIGH SCORE

THE STORIES BEHIND THE SCORES

With a score of 1,695,265 on the ultra-difficult tournament setting, Roy Shildt has held the Missile Command world record for 20 years. Paul Drury spoke to the man himself about this incredible, and controversial, achievement



With a nod to Sigmund Freud, Roy Shildt explains: "Missile Command has a subconscious attraction due to its phallic association. It's a unique 'shoot and explode' type of game where you can really get your rockets off. It takes balls to play it, pure and simple."

At *Retro Gamer* we know that to become a world champion on any arcade game requires years, sometimes decades, of dedicated practice, and for a player to devote so much of their life to a game means it must occupy a special place in their heart. But we weren't expecting the appeal to be in the loins. Roy confesses, though, that Missile Command became an obsession.

"I dedicated my life to the game. It was in the lobby of the student dorm at the University of California, Los Angeles, where I was studying, and I was playing it three or four hours a day for five years. I graduated college a year and a half later than I should have just so I could carry on playing it."



Roy in his youth, when the world was black and white

Keeping score

Roy's gruelling regime and incredible trackball skills led to his first world record in 1982, when after 38 hours and 24 minutes of solid play, he clocked up 60 million points. He is fairly dismissive of this feat, however, as it was achieved with the machine on the standard factory setting, which awards bonus cities.

"Marathon game records are irrelevant. They're pretty easy to get if the machine is giving you a free city every 10,000 points. Then at around 800,000 there's a bug in the game that gives you a

MISSILE COMMAND









›Tricking the 2600

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a new contender. Retro Gamer reader Tony 'TT' Temple from Derbyshire, England, has come a long way since first playing Missile Command in Rita's Cafe in Bristol in 1981. Having survived years of passive smoking and greasy breakfasts, he spent nine hours in 1984 racking up a marathon score of 14 million. Last September, after two decades apart, he acquired his own machine, beautifully restored by Archer MacLean to mint condition, and tries to play a few hours every day.

"No two games are the same," says Tony. "That's what keeps me coming back for more. I've been playing on tournament setting for three months now. Tournament is about as hard as it gets on any machine – it's just relentless. I'm up to 1,315,000 points, verified on videotape, which is pretty close. Playing the machine, I realise just how phenomenal Roy's record is – the game is so unforgiving after 500,000 points. But just give me a few more weeks…"



Representing the UK, Tony Temple and his weapon of choice, Missile Command

whole stack of extra cities, making those big scores basically worthless."

In response to this, Twin Galaxies, the official guardian of world record videogame scores, declared a new 'tournament' setting for Missile Command in 1983, which didn't award *any* bonus cities, just the six you begin with. Undeterred, Roy continued to hone his skills. He developed new strategies in response to this far harder setting, including protecting just the one city to the left of the central base against the relentless barrage of enemy fire. A tournament in 1984 saw him reach 1.4 million, an accomplishment which led to him becoming the first inductee to the Videogame Hall of Fame. So travelling up to Johnny Zee's Family Fun Centre in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, for the Videogame Masters Tournament in the summer of 1985, Roy felt understandably confident.

"Yeah, I knew I could improve my score, but when I got there, there was no Missile Command machine! Once the owner saw I'd arrived, he went and got one, but it didn't come in till the second day of the tournament. Then there was a problem with the trackball. The mechanic was great, but didn't fix it until the day after, so I'd missed out on three days of play that the other contestants had had. But it was OK, as Walter Day [Twin Galaxies scorelord] said I could have extra time. I didn't go round discussing that with the other players – most of them were teenagers – so when I did get 1.6 million on 3rd July, a lot of people thought it wasn't fair because I'd had extra time, but then they didn't know the circumstances."

So whilst that amazing score was officially recognised and appeared in the *Guinness Book of World Records* in 1986 along with Roy's picture, the only time a videogame player has been featured ("I'm a relentless, obsessive guy and sent a photo of myself to Guinness, which luckily they used"), the controversy raged on. Decades later, the validity of the score itself has even been queried, mention of which causes Roy to launch a vitriolic tirade against his detractors. The full force of his wrath is directed at Billy 'Perfect Pac-Man' Mitchell, who he describes as "insanely jealous" of Roy's induction into the Hall of Fame, and whilst his potentially libellous allegations of corruption are best left to the courtroom, Roy does see the bigger picture.

"Some people are trying to say it never happened, that it's an impossible score. It's a prime example of the heinously dishonest bullshit that goes on in America today. The OJ Simpson trial – what a joke. The Presidential election corruption in Florida – everyone knows Bush cheated. Then the lies over Weapons of Mass Destruction – there never were any. And now this – the cherry on the top of the bullshit cake."

Roy's is understandably irate that his integrity should come into question. He is intensely proud of his record and even has an alter-ego to advertise the fact. "You know how pro-wrestlers give themselves names and dress up to make it more interesting? Well, I wanted to do the same for videogames. I've got this kind of military uniform, like something out of *Sergeant Pepper's*, and I ride round in an 'Awesome Mobile' calling myself 'The Missile Commander'."

Position of power

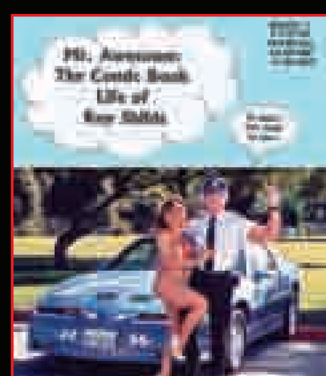
Not content with appearing on the Howard Stern show in 2000, Roy now harbours presidential ambitions and is seeking the Democratic Nomination for 2008. Indeed, as the role of US President includes being Commander-in-Chief – the man in charge of the world's largest nuclear arsenal – having superhuman Missile Command skills should surely be an essential attribute for any serious candidate?

"That's an interesting concept," muses Roy. "It wouldn't hurt. Hey, if an idiot like Bush can get elected, why can't I?"

In case his dextrous fingers should ever be called upon to save the Free World, Roy has recently bought a Missile Command cabinet and is back in practice. His scores are already exceeding 1 million, though he does acknowledge his record is breakable.

"My score can definitely be beaten, but it's going to take a lot of work. You need someone with talent and intelligence. I have an IQ of 138, which is half a per cent less than a genius. I have a mathematical brain and good pool skills. I'm a talented guy."

Well, even if that someone can be found it's unlikely they will be as colourful, entertaining and outspoken as Roy. For more on this remarkable man, go to **www.royawesome.com** where you can order his autobiography, *The Comic Book Life of Roy Shildt*. And he may yet end up with his finger on the big red button…



Get good at videogames and you too can enjoy fast cars and even faster women…

eMag

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Richard Burton once again sifts through the myriad of online retro auctions, sniffing out the unique items and interesting stories so you don't have to

It's a dark and stormy night. Concealed amongst the shadows of a dank and musty bedroom lurks a dust-covered NES console. The owner enters warily and switches on the system with trepidation and unease. The power light flickers on and the gut-wrenching horror engulfs him like an infinite death fall in Jet Set Willy. There are ghostly voices mumbling and laughing in the background of games, pets fleeing for their lives from the very sight of the cursed console, and even games picking their own options. But is this a case of ghosts in the machine or cash in the bank?

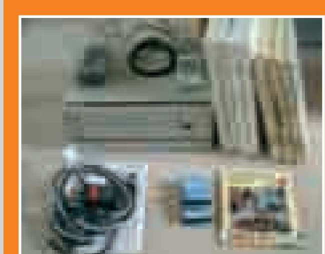
The story goes that the supposedly haunted NES was given to a US thrift shop by the father of a recently deceased son. The auction listing goes on to weave a tale of horrible happenings and trouser-filling moments not seen since the 8-bit conversions of OutRun were released. What has completely amazed us is the sheer number of people that have taken an interest in the item. The end price was finally laid to rest at just over US$225, with the auction receiving over 145,000 hits. *The X-Files* has certainly got a lot to answer for…

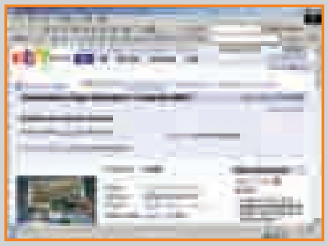
›School project

We're guessing that some readers will have taken part in the 1986 BBC Domesday Project while at secondary school. This involved a few days away from the classroom spent wandering the community doing surveys and gathering information. The point of it all was to store pictures, stories and local data from your area to give future generations a unique national and regional insight into life in the 1980s.

This information was stored on laserdiscs and played on a Philips LV-ROM player in conjunction with a BBC Master 128 computer, which had been souped up with an extra processor and SCSI card. With the systems costing around £4,000 when released, this worthy project was mainly restricted to schools, universities and libraries.

Over the years the machines have been superseded. Many have probably been long since ditched by unsuspecting teachers clad in corduroy jackets with brown patches on the elbows and a faint whiff of Cutter's Choice about them. The Domesday Project was part of our nostalgic school days and the final bid price of £555 for the system is a good result for the seller and a rare and interesting purchase for the buyer. Everyone's a winner.





The rarity of Moonstone is no doubt due to the game being unavailable in the US (Mindscape didn't release the game Stateside because of its high gore content)

Buy it now!

Staying in the US, a ZX80 tape from the Learning Lab series recently went under the virtual hammer on eBay USA. With original ZX80 software being a fairly rare commodity, the final price of US$60 wasn't surprising.

A perennial Auction Watch favourite and dead cert to line your pockets is Ultimate's sub-standard offering Bubbler. This time the intermittent appearance of the Amstrad CPC version managed to rake in a very reasonable £43 for its seller.

Another seller who will be extremely pleased with his auction takings this month is Paul Cawley, who contacted us regarding the incredibly pleasing price his Amiga game achieved. Moonstone by Mindscape International is certainly a rare game to find, although I think everyone was caught unawares by the stupendous end price of £226. Needless to say, another copy of the game appeared whilst Paul's auction was going through the roof and when that ended a week or so later, it could only pull in a relatively lacklustre £72.

Another Commodore game swelling the bank balance of its owner is the infamous The Great Giana Sisters from Rainbow Arts. Released for the C64 and, rumour has it, the Spectrum, the game had to be swiftly withdrawn from the shops once the mighty Nintendo clapped eyes on it. The fact that the gameplay had more than a passing resemblance to another game featuring a moustachioed character of Italian extraction with a penchant for u-bends was enough to make Nintendo flex its corporate muscle and have the game consigned to the scrapheap. Unfortunately for Nintendo, it wasn't quite quick enough and several hundred copies found their way into the gaming wilderness. With extremely limited numbers of The Great Giana Sisters available, collectors pay a tidy sum when it makes a rare appearance on eBay. This copy went under the hammer for a very reasonable £38.50. Just don't tell Nintendo…



The ever-reliable Great Giana Sisters, clocking up a nice £38.50 when recently auctioned on eBay

The Retro Forum

Have your say... Send us a letter or make yourself heard on the forum



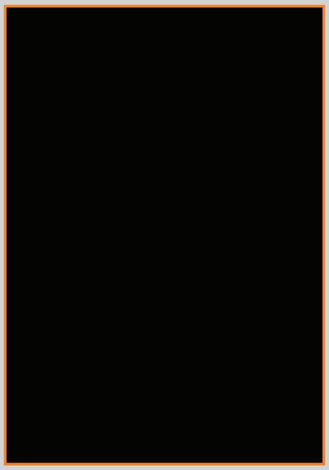
PS2 Amigo

I walked into my local newsagents the other day and couldn't believe it when I saw your magazine on the shelf. Better still, it had an Amiga emulator with it. The problem is, I don't have a PC, so I was wondering if there is such a thing as an Amiga emulator for the PlayStation 2 that would let me play games like Barbarian 1 and 2, Moonstone and Mortal Kombat.

I would be mega-grateful if you could let me know of any such an emulator. Keep up the good work – the magazine's great!

Gary, Chester

RG: We've had a rummage around for you, and as luck would have it, there is an Amiga emulator available for the PlayStation 2. UAE for PS2 is a port of the popular cross-platform Amiga emulator and can be found at www.volny.cz/molej/ps2/uae.htm. The emulator is still in the early stages of development, so we cannot guarantee that it will work 100% correctly, but it is looking promising. Obviously though, you'll need a modified PS2 to run the emulator, and copies of the actual games as disk images.



Amiga anniversary

As a regular reader of your very fine magazine (I am now on issue 12 – please keep up the very good work), I feel that I must write you. Also, this is the first time that I have ever written to any type of magazine, so please take it easy on me.

As you may or may not know, the Amiga is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year (25th July 1985 – 25th July 2005) and I was wondering what you had planned for this event. As for myself, I own quite a few Amigas, starting with an A1500. I also own three A500s, three A500+ systems, an A600HD and two A1200HDs, as well as a Commodore 64 and a VIC-20. All of which are in fully working order along with plentiful amounts of software, most of which is original and in very good condition. I also have an A570 CD-ROM drive (sadly, not working) and a 1GB GVP A500-HD8+ hard drive, plus a Vidi Amiga 12 screen grabber and a G-Soft Audio imager, again, in full working order.

The main reason why I am writing to you is to find out what you are planning (if anything) for the Amiga's birthday. I am willing to loan you one or more of my beloved Amigas to put on show, if you wish to do so that is. Also, I use my Amigas almost every day along with my IBM clones and also my Sega Dreamcast, Saturn and Nintendo 64. The one thing I am missing is a CN2

http://from.the.retro.forums

This month on the forums we asked you to share stories of your best retro finds. Have you found an ultra rare game lying at the bottom of a bargain bucket? Or has a trip to eBay yielded an amazing lot full of retro rarities? Here are some of your posts

ID: >Officer Plankton<

A few years ago I went into my local Game shop to trade in an old PS1 game that I didn't like and whilst browsing around I saw a new copy of Castlevania Symphony of the Night for £14.99. I'd never heard of the game, but it looked interesting especially as it came with an art book and music CD, so I left the shop feeling quite pleased with myself.

I had a quick go of the game, but due to some unknown reason, it went on my shelf never to be played again. It was only a few years later that I realised what a superb game it was and how it was quite a lucky find.

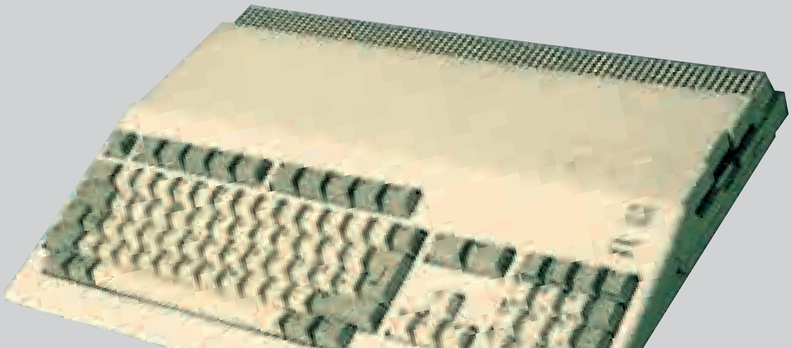
ID: >Mr Moose<



I bought a box of C64 games on eBay for £8. Not only did it have all the usual suspects like Chiller (my God I've got boat loads of that game now), but it also had a book about fixing your car and a game called Super-Gran. Remember that old TV show eh?

ID: >a_j_green<

It's going back a few years now, but when Gremlin Graphics was housed above the late lamented Just Micro



Datacassette recorder and a 1541 disk drive, so if anybody out there can help me out, I would be very happy.

I am hoping to arrange an Amiga day at my local library, as I believe the Amiga range of home computers should be remembered. And, as it was the Amiga A1000/A500 that really started the ball rolling, I think the Amiga should be remembered on TV and radio as well as on the Net.

Also, I have just bought issue 13 (volume two, issue one) of your magazine and I like the new format. Thank you for the Amiga Forever coverdisc, which is by far the best disc you given away so far.

On a side note, I also have one of two problems with some emulators, most specifically the Sega Saturn emulator, which I cannot get to work at all. Gens (the Megadrive emulator) also refuses to play Mega-CD games, although the readme file claims that it can. Could you please help me with this?

DP Kendall, Ellesmere Port

RG: That's certainly an impressive Commodore collection you have there! Rest assured, the Amiga's 25th anniversary hasn't escaped us, and we will have some more Amiga coverage very soon. It won't be an Amiga history type feature (we covered that back in issue 8), but we have a little something planned.

Your emulator problem sounds quite simple really. We suspect that the Sega Saturn emulator simply doesn't support commercial games, as the Saturn is very hard to emulate, so you may need to wait for a better version to arrive. Gens however, does support the Mega-CD, but, getting it to work can be a real pain. The most common problem is your PC's CD-ROM drivers. You may need to make sure that you have the latest ASPI drivers installed (search Google), otherwise Gens won't actually detect your CD drive. For more information, we suggest you check out the official Gens forums at http://gens.consolemul.com.

Oh, the horror!

Just a quick email to mention something you printed in issue 15 about the Rocky Horror Picture Show comparisons on C64 and C128. I don't know about you lot, but I'd hardly call the C128 version an update. It looks more like a blocky sickly toffee banana nightmare!

Look again at the detail of the C64 version, the Rocky Horror Show text at the bottom of the screen, the detailed graphics… OK fair enough, the colour is not as good, but is that a bad thing?

It's like they've sacrificed detail for colour (bad move). I never played the Commodore 128 version, but I can imagine the graphics collision detection would be worse than the C64 version. It's bizarre that something more powerful could look so much worse…

Daz Bamf, Streatham

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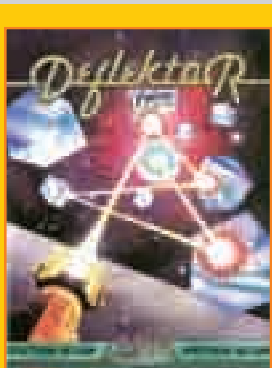
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RG: What are you talking about Daz? The C64 version is clearly just a lazy port of the rubbish monochrome Spectrum version, with a splash of colour thrown in. The C128 version, on the other hand, was obviously developed from the ground up and features more colourful graphics and more detailed character sprites. There



shop in Sheffield, it decided to have a bargain bucket, and put a whole bunch of 8-bit Gremlin games in there for ridiculous prices. A mate of mine bought Deflektor on the Spectrum (which was only about six months old at the time) for the princely sum of 3p, and lots of other ones, which were all still fairly recent for 10p. When I got there, the cheapest ones were 49p – which was still a huge amount off the RRP which was around the £8 mark at the time.

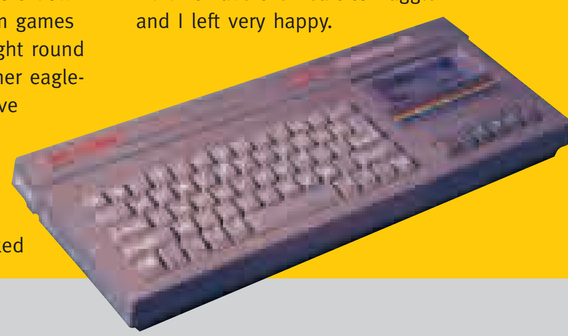


ID:>readboy<

My best buy was at a Gosport car boot sale in 2001. My wife and I were visiting her Dad and we saw the boot sale on the drive home. After 20 minutes or so I spotted a C64 (breadbin). Nice, I thought, and asked how much. The old guy who was selling said 50 pence the lot. The lot also included a 1541 diskette drive with numerous game disks and some that were obviously used for game development. There was also a small red Datel hardware device that I still haven't identified (anyone?). Got home and everything worked fine.

ID: >Neilos626<

My biggest bargain was spotted by my mother-in-law. She knows that I collect old computer gear and phoned me one day, saying that she had spotted an ad in a house window a few doors down from her about Spectrum games for sale. So I went straight round there, thinking some other eagle-eyed collector would have beaten me to it. I knocked on the door and an old women answered and told me she still had them. I asked her how many games there were and she said a few. When I saw the collection I couldn't believe it! 114 mint games, mostly big box versions, and a mint boxed grey Speccy +2. I asked her how much and she said she didn't really know what it was worth. I explained to her that it was old and not worth a lot so would a tenner do? Make it £12 she said. I didn't have the heart to haggle and I left very happy.



is even a couple of extra locations not included in the C64 game, making it the better version overall – in our humble opinion at least.

Right click

I'm writing to find out if you know anything about the *Click* video magazine. I have issue 2 from 1992, but I have no idea how long the series lasted or if anyone else knows anything about it. The video itself contains reviews, features and cheats. Please help shed some light on this. Thanks and keep up the good work.

Steven Rance, via email

RG: We do remember *Click* and have watched the first issue on VHS. Sadly, it only ran for two issues before it was canned, presumably as people just didn't buy it (it was around a fiver, which was a bit steep for a magazine back then). *Click* was edited by Tony Dillon who worked for Emap, contributing to such magazines as *Sinclair User*. Although many of the reviews were a little on the flaky side, the content was generally very good, and it makes for great viewing if you want to see games of yesteryear up and running. Bizarrely enough, one of the presenters/reviewers on the show was Jake Wood, who would go on to star in various TV shows such as *Red Dwarf* and *Press Gang*.







Sonic legends

Thank you for the excellent review of Sonic Mega Collection Plus. I've had it for a while and already I'm going back to my middle school days when I was a Megadrive owner and me and my mate loved everything to do with Sonic and anything Megadrive related. Even today I'm still a big Sonic fan and I am always looking forward to the blue guy's next adventure (although Sonic Heroes was a little disappointing when I got to play it).

So, I was wondering if *Retro Gamer* would do a feature on Sonic? A feature covering all the games he's stared in, the cameos from other Sega games he's been in and maybe even take a look at the other Sonic-related merchandise. Why not take a look at the comic book from Archie Comic Publications, which is still going today, and the UK's own *Sonic the Comic* (which I used to collect)? You could also look at the different cartoons he has stared in over the years from *The Adventures Of Sonic the Hedgehog* to the more action-packed *Sonic the Hedgehog*, and *Sonic X* which is now being shown on Jetix. And how about an interview with Sonic creator Yuji Naka, maybe within the feature itself or for your Desert Island Disks section of your magazine? I know it's a tall order but maybe if it's too big you can spilt it into two or more features like you did with the Level 9 feature? Whatever you decide to do on the subject I think the blue guy deserves it. Keep up the good work!

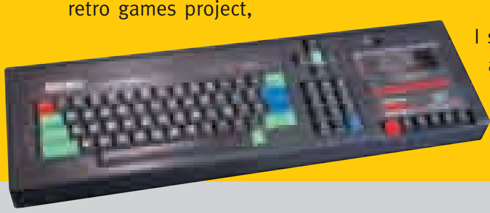
Daniel Heath, Surrey

RG: Thanks for your letter Daniel. Sonic Mega Collection Plus brought back some fond memories for us too, and we totally agree that Sega's mascot is more than worthy of his very own feature. He's certainly appeared in more games than most other characters (even Mario), and his impact on the gaming world can still be seen today. We're sure that at some point in the future the blue 'hog will race onto the pages of *Retro Gamer*, perhaps to tie-in with the release of the upcoming Shadow the Hedgehog game.

ID: >electro<

Last year my cousin was moving house and was short of space. As a result he gave me his Megadrive and 20 games, plus his Amstrad CPC464 with monitor and TV tuner box complete with well over 80 games. All this in nearly new condition for the small price of £0. Yes, ziltch.

Just last week in college I was asking where I'd get my hands of some old non-working consoles for parts as I'm working on a retro games project, and a guy in my class told me he had a Spectrum +2, over 200 games, a cartridge loader, and a broken joystick. The only problem being that the keyboard was not working. So I'm getting it fixed up. I offered him some money but he declined, so again my bargain hunting only cost me absolutely nothing. Customer services didn't receive any complaints anyway.



ID: >king monkey<

I saw an auction on eBay for a box of Commodore stuff out of someone's attic. It was untested and didn't give too many details. The starting price was £10 with another £10 postage and no one was biting so I took a chance. When the huge box arrived I found a boxed C64c with boxed Datacassette, and another unboxed C64c (both working). There was also a boxed VIC-20 (and the box was mint) but with no leads or power, and then there was an Amiga 500 and Amiga 600 with no leads or power. I couldn't be bothered trying to track down leads to test the VIC-20 so I put it back on eBay and got £38 (just for the box according to the buyer). It was worth the risk in the end as I made double my money back and still got two Commodore 64s and two Amigas.

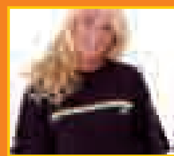


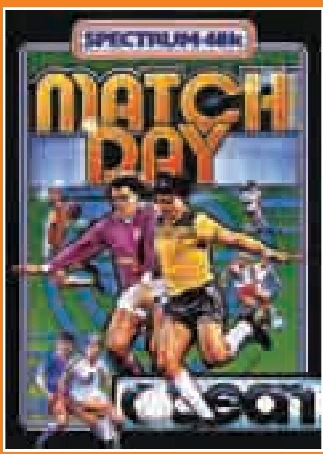
ID: >Keyamon<

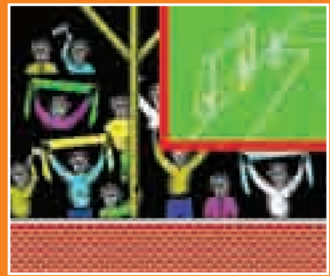
At the last place I lived I'd just parked up and was walking round

Star Letter

Want to grab yourself a quality piece of retro-gaming merchandise? Each month we'll select our favourite letter – one that makes us smile or think – and the winner can select one of our retro-themed T-shirts for free...









Ritman crazy

I thought I'd drop you a quick email (on behalf of my credit card company) to say many thanks for the feature on Jon Ritman in issue 15. As a result of that interview, I have hit eBay and various shops with such force (on a scale never seen before in my household) for anything 'Jon Ritman' related. I just hope that the wife is out when the next credit card bill is due!

Match Day for the Spectrum was the only football game that has ever appealed to me and I've yet to play another footy game, even though I now own all the current next-gen consoles. I don't really know what that says about me (although I can guess what Pro Evolution Soccer fans will be screaming), but what I do know is that it gave me many hours of pleasure throughout a long weekend. It's funny how a simple screenshot of a much-loved game can bring back so many happy memories. I'm now looking forward to tracking down more of Jon Ritman's games that I missed all those years ago.

Richard Matthews, via email

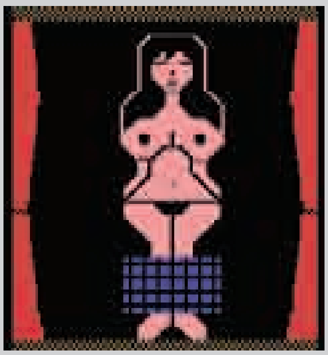
RG: It's always heartening to hear that articles in the magazine have stirred up emotions – we guess it means we're doing a good job. While not the most prolific 8-bit programmer, Jon Ritman certainly had a hand in some classic games, most noticeably Match Day and Head over Heels. Getting hold of his back catalogue shouldn't prove too difficult, although some of his early Artic titles (in particular Namtir Raiders, which was released on the ZX81) may take a bit of tracking down.

As it sounds as though you'll be operating on a tight budget from now on, you'd better have a *Retro Gamer* T-shirt on us to keep yourself warm.

Commodore 69

I've found a strange little C64 porn site at **http://girls.c64.org**. Is it just me, or is there anyone else interested in seeing pictures of dirty women on antique computers? Any chance of an article on this?

Michael Braisher, via email



RG: Erm... very interesting. Yes, the computer porn industry was up and running long before the Internet, with lots of lovely ladies parading themselves on 8-bit computers all over the world. We know that the guys at *Commodore Scene* put on a mini-magazine featuring galleries of C64 porn images and it was one of their most popular titles, so no, you're not alone. We're not sure we could get away with a similar feature in *RG* however...

Oric lore

I was reading *Retro Gamer* just now and noticed a mention of Cronosoft in the Retro Scene section. I then noticed it mentioned that a new game is being developed for the Oric. Whilst this is cool, it is not breaking news. I am currently around 75% through writing a conversion of Times of Lore for

the back to my flat when I noticed a skip with a large TV in it. It had started raining, but I though "Hmmm worth a look." You would not believe what I found – a bin liner full of Spectrum games, an Amiga CD32 and a Nintendo Virtual Boy! Unfortunately the CD32 didn't work, but the Spectrum games did and after a bit of cleaning up the Virtual Boy did too! It's amazing what people will throw away, but as long as they do it where I can find it I'm quite happy.



ID: >Borstal<

After much Gamestation bashing on this forum this will cheer you up no end. Last week I went into my local GS and bought a few games. One of which was a boxed Streets of Rage 2. The smug guy behind the counter told me that SOR 3 was the rare one to which I replied "Yes, I know." After paying the princely sum of £4.99 I sold it a week later on eBay for £20.

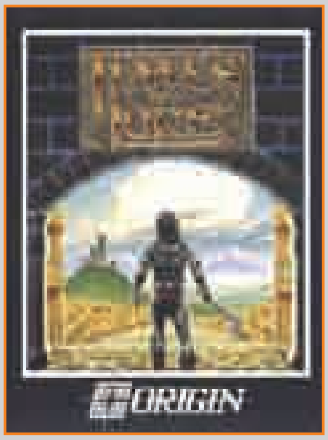
My best boot find was a lovely copy of Tombi for the PS1 which cost me 50p and I later sold for £38.

ID: >Deano<

I've had many a good find at car boot sales, but the best was when I had been round the whole of my local car boot and had seen nothing, and was kinda starting to feel like I'd be going home empty handed, till the last car I came to had a rubber-keyed Spectrum sticking out of a box. On closer inspection there were two Spectrum 48Ks which both worked fine, two Spectrum+ systems (one which worked, the other didn't), a Sinclair Interface 1, a Multiface 128, joysticks, tape decks and about 50 or so boxed games ! The price – a very reasonable £10! Made my day!

ID: >YamErias<

Best deal for me was a few years ago when I was doing volunteer



the Oric (ported from the C64 version).

Whilst at this stage I am a little concerned about copyright problems (it was written in 1988 – does the 10-year rule apply?), I'm not interested in profit anyway, just maybe a little feedback and publicity. Whilst Times of Lore is still in production, there have been a few other games I have produced over the last few years for the Oric. ZipNZap was written around 1999, and Pulsoids in 2002 (possibly my most popular, but not the most technically advanced game), with additional help from Defence Force (The Oric Demo Group!). And before that was Magnetix in 1997, which took five years to write but which got little feedback. If you want more information on this and other games, please visit **www.oric.org**. Once I figure out how to capture screenshots from my latest game (under Windows XP everything is different), I will give you some thirst quenchers. Times of Lore is planned for a mid-2005 release.

Jonathan Bristow, via email

RG: Thanks for the heads up Jonathan – we admit we were unaware that Oric games are still being developed. Let us know when your version of Times of Lore is finished and we'll feature it in Retro Scene.

Disc-ommunication

I am writing to let you know that I have only recently seen your magazine in the shops. I am very interested in buying it, but the problem I have is the coverdisc. I have an Amiga and a Commodore 64, but they won't take the disc. Please will you let me know what I should do.

Mr A Hicks, Barnsley



RG: Thank you for your letter, although we're not too sure what you would like. *Retro Gamer* covers as many formats as possible, but the coverdisc is for PC only (and sometimes Mac too). Unfortunately, we cannot provide the coverdisc for other formats. Sorry!

Where's Racer?

I know this is a little late, but I've moved house recently and have only just had a chance to sit down and read the issue 15 properly.

It's only a small gripe, but a gripe nonetheless. I realise you couldn't have included every single Star Wars game ever made in the feature, particularly as more and more are being made all the time, but it was a little unfair to mention the terrible Star Wars Episode 1 action games without giving any mention to the superb Star Wars Episode 1: Racer released on the Nintendo 64 (and later, Dreamcast). It's a game I still play a lot today and is a very worthy rival to the F-Zero series (and much more than a match for Wipeout) – particularly by the time you reach the full length Boonta Eve Classic race near the end of the game, with a fully powered-up Pod Racer capable of speeds that actually make your eyes water whilst you play!

As I say, it just seemed a bit of a sad note to end a feature by mentioning one of the worst Star Wars games ever (Episode 1: The Action Game), when the same movie also inspired one of the best ever (Episode 1: Racer).

Maybe I'm just being a little fanatical though. Either way, the magazine is still a great read. Keep up the good work.

ToxieDogg, via email

RG: Good to hear from you again Terrence. Yours is not the only email to point out that we skipped Racer from our final Star Wars feature. The idea was to just briefly mention the later Star Wars game, with the Episode 1 action game getting a small mention because it was such a let-down. However, in a couple of years' time there may be some mileage in a feature looking at futuristic racers like F-Zero, Wipeout and Racer.



work. A place was shutting down and they had a BBC computer, monitor, double disk drive, printer and over 400 floppy disks. They were about to throw it away when I asked how much they wanted for it, and they gave it to me! It was great, loads of games



(including my favourite, L-Game!) and all the manuals and everything!

I was gutted when it died a few days ago…

ID: >vince<

I was on my way to a boot sale when I noticed a smaller one on the way. The wife did not want to stop, but after a lot of pleading we did. I could not believe my eyes. The first stall had a Vectrex with the Minesweeper overlay and an extra game Berzerk. My heart was pounding as I tried to get the lady's attention without seeming too excited. I nearly had a heart attack when she said "just give me £2." I now regularly play the Vectrex (I've bought more games from eBay).

I also got this little lot from a local classified ad last week – BBC Model B with 5.25in drive and some software on disks and cassettes, a 48KB rubber-keyed Spectrum, and a VHS video called "The Business Microcomputer" presented by Chris Serie. I got all this for £15.

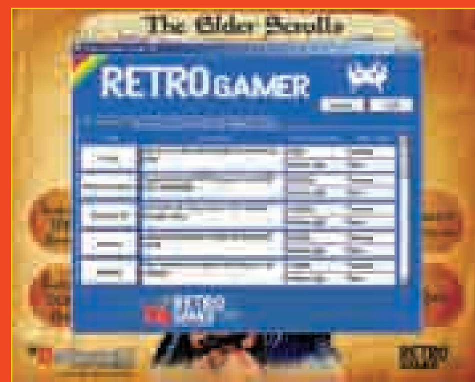


Retro Coverdisc

This month we've teamed up with Bethesda Softworks to bring you Arena, the first game in the epic Elder Scrolls series. This is no demo or time-limited trial – it's the full version, and one of the largest game worlds ever conceived awaits you. Before you begin you'll first need to install DOSBox, a DOS emulator that will allow Arena to run on modern PCs. To help you get started, we've provided this guide to installing and running this mammoth RPG. Enjoy!



step 1 Place the coverdisc into your CD/DVD drive and it should start automatically. If not, select Run from the Start menu and enter *D:\browser.exe* (assuming that D: is the letter of your CD/DVD drive). After a brief pause the main coverdisc menu will appear.



step 2 Full instructions on how to install and run The Elder Scrolls: Arena (using the DOXBox utility) are included on the opposite page. If you wish to access the usual *Retro Gamer* coverdisc browser, simply click the Launch Browser button.



step 3 Some of the games/programs are provided as executable files and these will run or install straight from the disc. If a setup wizard appears, simply follow the on-screen prompts and then wait while the files are copied to your hard drive.



step 4 Many games/programs are stored in zipped archives, so you might need an archive manager like WinZip, which is under the Utilities browser tab. Extract all the files from the archive using the Extract feature and place them in an empty folder, then run the executable file.

Problem solving

If you're having a problem with a particular program on our coverdisc, please view the help file in the program for assistance. You might also consider visiting the website of the program author for further help. Otherwise, email **techsupport@livepublishing.co.uk**.

If you are having problems with the CD, first check that it is not dirty or scratched. CDs can be cleaned by holding them under the cold water tap and gently rubbing the silver side with a tissue. Dry it carefully with another tissue.

If the disc still doesn't work, then it may be faulty. Faulty discs should be returned to Retro Gamer, Live Publishing International Ltd, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire, UK, SK10 4NP. We will replace all genuinely faulty discs.

Coverdisc helpline

01625 855051

techsupport@livepublishing.co.uk

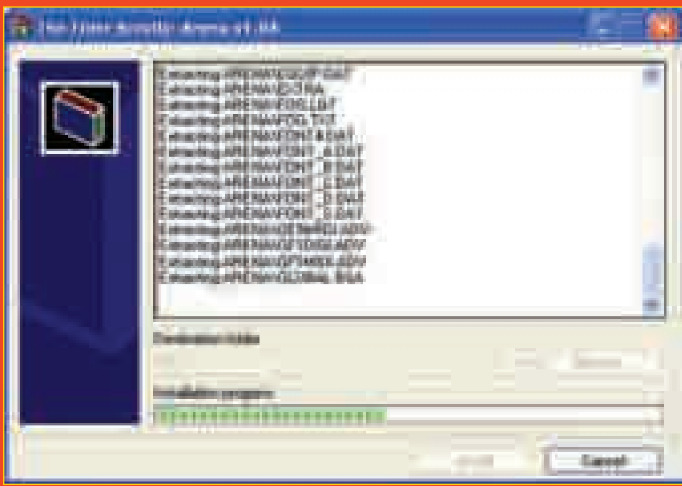
(Monday-Friday 10am-4pm)

Helpline for coverdisc problems only

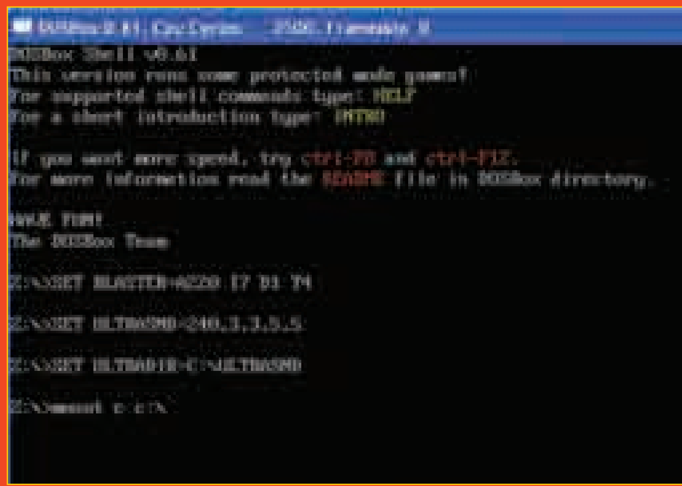
DISCLAIMER

Some of the programs on the Retro Gamer disc interact with your PC on a fundamental level. We strongly advise you back up your personal data before using the disc. Due to the way the Retro Gamer disc is compiled, Retro Gamer, Live Publishing International Limited and/or any associated company and/or individual cannot take responsibility for damage to your PC or otherwise arising from use of the disc. You use the programs on the disc at your own risk.

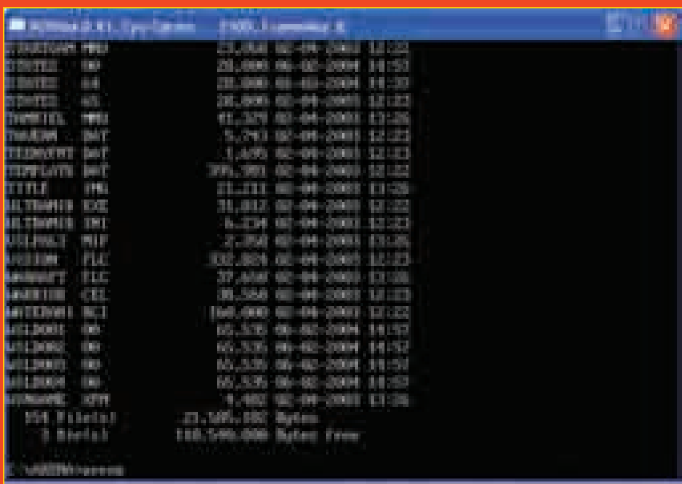
Running The Elder Scrolls: Arena



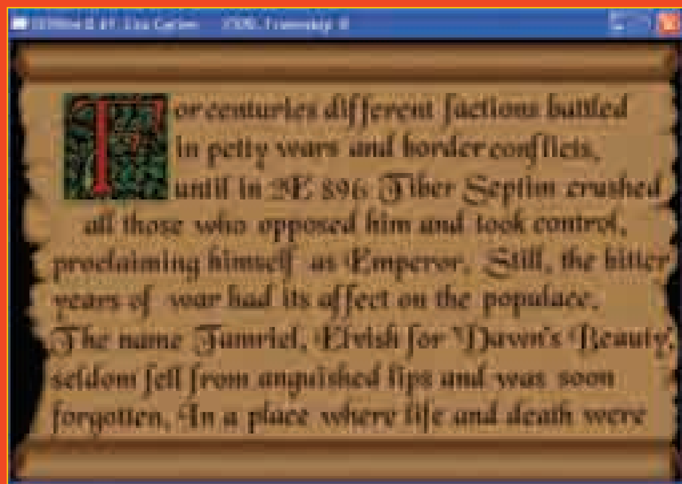
step 1 You first need to install the game from the coverdisc. Select Install TES Arena from the main coverdisc menu and the installer will appear. You can change the installation destination if you wish, but for this guide we're going to leave it as C:\. Click Install to begin.



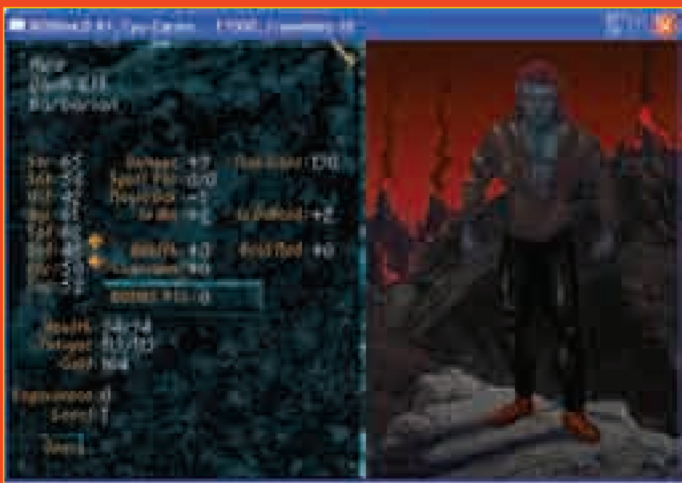
step 2 Once done you'll also need to install DOSBox (this can also be accessed from the main coverdisc menu). Install this utility and then launch it from your Start menu. Now, you'll need to mount a drive for DOSBox to use. So, type in *mount c c:* (assuming you installed to C).



step 3 Your C drive will be accessible in DOSBox now, so type in *c:* and press Enter. Now type *cd arena* and press Enter to access the game's directory. Finally type *arena* and hit Enter again. DOSBox will now run the game in its emulated DOS mode.



step 4 The game will now launch. However, it will most likely run in a window which will be quite small. To change this and run the game in full screen mode, press Alt+Enter. This will resize the window to full screen mode. To return to a windowed view press Alt+Enter again.



step 5 To get started in the game itself, you must begin by choosing a character type (by double clicking on your chosen class), or you can answer questions to determine your ideal character. Once chosen, enter a name, choose a home province and then tailor your avatar to suit you.



step 6 Once your character is set up, you're off into the world of The Elder Scrolls, but first you need to escape the dungeon you begin in. If the game is running too slowly, press CTRL+F12 to speed up the emulation. A speed of around 15,000 cycles should be about right for most modern PCs.

Getting Started



Can't wait to start the first Elder Scrolls adventure? Then follow our guide and head into the vast world of Tamriel

The story so far...

Uriel Septim, the emperor of Tamriel, is betrayed by one of his closet allies, Jagar Tharn. Tharn is the battlemage to the Emperor, and using an ancient artefact known as the Staff of Chaos, banishes Septim to an alternate dimension. With his master now disposed of, Tharn takes over the Emperor's identity and takes his place in the throne.

However, this terrible deed does not go unnoticed, as you and another of Septim's associates, Ria Silmane, discover Tharn's plot and aim to expose the evil pretender. But before you can achieve this goal, Tharn discovers your plans and kills Ria, then imprisons you in the Imperial dungeons. He then destroys the Staff of Chaos, the only item that can return the true Emperor, and splits it into eight pieces, which are then spread over the whole of Tamriel.

But all is not lost, and with the help of Ria's ghost, you manage to escape your shackles and set off on a great journey to recover the pieces of the Staff of Chaos and to defeat the evil tyrant once and for all. Now your lifeforce is green, your cause is just. Face the dungeon door and step boldly forward...





Game controls

Up arrow	Walk forward
Down arrow	Walk backward
Left arrow	Turn left
Right arrow	Turn right
Ctrl + arrow	Run forward/backward
ESC	Setup menu
F1	Character sheet
F8	Toggle compass on/off
F3	Change damage mode
A	Attack
C	Cast
J	Jump
L	Logbook
M	Automap
P	Pick/steal
R	Rest/camp option
S	Status of character
U	Use

Please note: Mouse is required. Double-click the left mouse button to use/pick up objects and to interact with the world. Press the right mouse button and move mouse to attack (having pressed A to draw weapon). For in-depth control information please read the Arena106 setup.doc file found in the Docs folder in Arena's installation directory.

Copy protection

During play, the game will ask for the cost of a spell. Use the table and enter the value associated with the spell to proceed.

SPELL NAME	COST
Auriel's Bow	4487
Auriel's Shield	3275
Cause Disease	975
Chrysamere	4725
Cure Poison	350
Earth Wall	400
Ebony Blade	8125
Ebony Mail	2420
Far Silence	675
Fireball	325
Fire Dart	375
Firestorm	490
Force Bolt	1050

SPELL NAME	COST
Force Wall	600
Free Action	260
God's Fire	3750
Heal	125
Heal True	445
Ice Bolt	367
Ice Storm	487
Invisibility	150
Levitate	50
Lifesteal	675
Light	120
Light Heal	70
Lightning	780

SPELL NAME	COST
Lord's Mail	2075
Medusa's Gaze	840
Necromancer's Amulet	1825
Open	300
Orc Strength	125
Passwall	600
Pitfalls	600
Purify	2590
Resist Cold	300
Resist Fire	300
Resist Poison	550
Resist Shock	300
Ring Of Khajiit	4490
Ring Of Phynaster	1800
Sanctuary	300
Shalidor's Mirror	775
Shield	250
Shock	225
Silence	450

SPELL NAME	COST
Spell Breaker	2230
Spell Drain	180
Spell Drain	630
Spell Shield	400
Staff of Magnus	2525
Stamina	60
Strength Leech	225
Toxic Cloud	700
Troll's Blood	450
Voldendrung	1620
Wanderlight	150
Warlock's Ring	2840
Wildfire	607
Wizard's Fire	187
Witch's Curse	300
Wizard Lock	300
Wizard Rend	740
Wyvern's Sting	525

Retro Mart

Looking for that elusive piece of retro goodness? Got an attic full of forgotten treasures to sell? Lucky for you, Retro Mart is here to help

Atari for sale

Atari 7800, boxed, in excellent condition – With two controllers and five games. Please email Simon at thebignutter@hotmail.com with your offers

Atari 2600 console – With joypads, plus 21 games, including Pac-Man, Asteroids, Mario Bros, Wizard of Wor. May split games. £50 ono. Please call Lee on 07795630745

Commodore wanted

At least two Saitek Megagrip MX-220 Joysticks – Town of Tunes CD. Please call Ian on 01992 418625

Sinclair for sale

Sabrewolf and Knightlore – In excellent condition (original not re-issues). £20 ono. Email me at richretrogames@aol.com

Sinclair 128 +2 – With many top games. Open to offers. Email me at richretrogames@aol.com

Mario Kart Remote Controlled – Mario and Yoshi both boxed mint condition. £40 ono each. Email me at richretrogames@aol.com

Full range of Sinclair cassette software – Came with Spectrum+ pack (Flight Sim, Othello etc). Never used. 10 tapes £20 ono. Call Ian on 07742895287

Sega for sale

Dreamcast tenth birthday pack (Jap) – Limited. Can be used on any Dreamcast. £25 with postage. Call Peter on 07748961899 for details

Golden Axe 3 for Mega Drive – Jp/Asian version, boxed with instructions, excellent condition. £20 + £1 insured P&P. Call 07840 819253 or email garethcrowley@amiga.e7even.com for photographs and/or details

California Games for Mega Drive – UK version, boxed with instructions, decent condition. £3 + £1 insured P&P. Call 07840 819253 or email garethcrowley@amiga.e7even.com for photo/details

Micro Machines for Mega Drive – UK version, boxed with instructions, good condition. £2 + £1 insured P&P. call 07840 819253 or email garethcrowley@amiga.e7even.com for photo/details

Fatal Fury II for Arcade CD-ROM – Japanese version, boxed with instructions, excellent condition. £8 + £1 insured P&P. Call 07840 819253 or email garethcrowley@amiga.e7even.com for photo/details

Sega wanted

Many Sega Saturn Games – Wanted for my collection including, Baku Baku, Sonic 3D, Die Hard Trilogy and more. Other Sega games also wanted. Please call Danny on 07916115481

Nintendo for sale

Perfect condition, never used boxed second edition Nintendo 64DD – Very rare. Plus Jap N64 (also boxed in perfect condition). Please email manterso@hotmail.com to receive pics and info

Nintendo wanted

Super Nintendo Gundam Wing Endless Duel – Will pay up to AUD$50 complete, or AUD$30 for cart. Also Metal Warriors, will pay up to AUD$30 complete. Send email to Superdracula@hotmail.com

Other for sale

Sonic Pocket for Neo-Geo Pocket Color – Brand new game in plastic case only £15 with postage. Paypal and Nochex welcome. Also have Fatal Fury for NGPC. Call 07748961899 and ask for Peter

Ultra Limited Edition Street Fighter Controllers – For PS2, brand new. £35 each (four in a set – Ken Ryu Chun Li Akuma). Postage £5 each. Paypal and Nochex welcome. Please call 07748961899 and ask for Peter

Panasonic Q (JAP/USA & Multi DVD region modified) DVD – Plus GameCube in one with lots of games, memory cards and pads. £450. Please call Peter on 07748961899

Retro Gamer issue 2 – Mint condition, coverdisc never removed. Open to offers. Email richretrogames@aol.com

Huge retro gaming collection for sale – Atari, Commodore, Sega, Sinclair etc. Too much to list. Please mail me on markyscollectables@tiscali.co.uk for details and/or requests

Sam Coupe – The Super Spectrum! – Boxed in original polystyrene packaging. Very rare. Good Condition. £130 plus postage. E-mail rich.beck@gmail.com

Retro Gamer Magazine issue one – Near mint condition, complete with coverdisc. £60 or swap for PSone Castlevania Symphony of the Night UK/USA only. Please email alfano@orange.net or text 07875283630

Retro magazines – ACE, EGM, Gamepro, Game Zone, Super Play and loads of SNES mags. Email petgibson@aol.com. Open to offers

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eMag

<<<Endgame>>>



This is it – the end of the game. First, destroy the Giger reject...



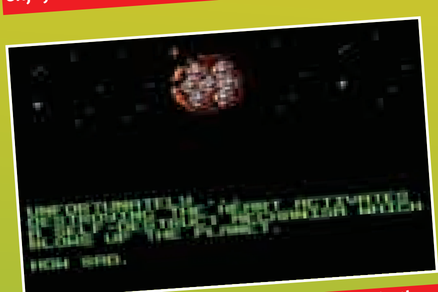
...then run through the tunnel, somersaulting over the spiky red things...



...and finally unload all your ammo into the beating heart of the alien



With a job well done, you can sit back and enjoy the well-earned end sequence



Bah! We don't remember *that* happening in the arcade version. Oh well, nevermind



This month, the rather unexpected conclusion to Ocean's Gryzor on the Amstrad CPC, created by programmers with a wicked sense of humour